



THE NOE VALLEY VOICE

City Retires a Few Yellow Zones On 24th Street

Drivers Gain Six Parking Spots on Busiest Blocks

By Liz Highleyman

January brought some good news for Noe Valley merchants: more parking for shoppers and diners on the neighborhood's main commercial strip.

At the request of the Noe Valley Merchants and Professionals Association, the city's Department of Parking and Traffic (DPT) changed the designation of several yellow commercial zones on 24th Street between Castro and Sanchez streets.

In the 4000 block between Castro and Noe, two yellow spaces in front of Le Zinc restaurant and two in front of Accent on Flowers were changed to full-time "general" parking—two-hour metered parking for the general public. Meanwhile, yellow zones were established in front of PlumpJack Wines and the Bank of America building. The two new commercial spots, one of which is near a bus stop, allow room for large delivery trucks.

The 3900 block of 24th Street between Sanchez and Noe saw a net gain of four general-use parking spaces. The four loading zones that once lined the curb outside the Real Food Company and Fresca Restaurant were reduced to two, freeing up two new public parking spots in front of Fresca. Across the street, two yellow zones in front of the Aveda cosmetics store also were converted to regular metered parking.



The city came out to repaint half of the long yellow loading zone outside Real Food Company and Fresca Restaurant, freeing up two of several new parking spots on 24th Street.

Photo by Pamela Gerord

In addition, the hours of commercial use for several parking spots within the two-block stretch were shortened, enabling shoppers to use the meters for a few hours in the afternoon. Instead of being devoted to deliveries until 6 p.m., about half a dozen yellow spaces were designated for commercial use just until 1 p.m. or 4 p.m., and some yellow zones were freed up for public parking on Saturdays. The start time of 7 a.m. for commercial zones remains in effect.

"A lot of the time after 11 a.m., most deliveries were done and the commercial spots would just be vacant while people drove around the block looking for parking," said Noe Valley Video co-owner

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Residents Hunger For a Locally Owned Grocery

Groups Set Their Sights on Bell Market Location

By Liz Highleyman

Responding to the long-term vacancies of two neighborhood grocery stores—Real Food Company on 24th Street and Mikeytom Market on Church Street—more than 40 residents packed St. Philip's Parish Hall on Jan. 12 to talk about bringing a community-oriented grocery store to Noe Valley.

With Bell Market—now the only full-service grocery in the neighborhood—currently up for sale, "We don't need another grocery store vacant for two years," said Friends of Noe Valley President Richard May, explaining why the meeting was held.

The grocery store summit was co-sponsored by the Friends, Upper Noe Neighbors, and Noe Valleyans for Community and Social Justice (NVCSJ). Leaders from each group sat on a panel, which also included District 8 Supervisor Bevan Dufty.

Dufky began with an overview of the present grocery crisis. The last word from the Cincinnati-based Kroger Co. was that it is looking to sell several stores in its Ralphs division, including the 24th Street Bell and the Castro and South Van Ness Cala Foods. Meanwhile, Nutraceutical Corporation, owner of the Real Food Company, which has been closed since August 2003, has promised the neighborhood it will remodel and reopen a health food store, but the company has yet to file any new permit applications.

Dufky said Nutraceutical was still not responding to his requests for a meeting to discuss Real Food's future. "I'm tired of trying to deal with them," he said. "I'm ready to ignore them for a while."

Vicki Rosen, president of Upper Noe Neighbors, expressed similar frustration

Noe Valley Library Finally Closing Feb. 11

City Coughs Up Extra Funds For Long-Delayed Renovation

By Corrie M. Anders

Let the celebration begin. Noe Valley's historic library has escaped a million-dollar financial crisis that had threatened to derail major renovations planned for the seismically feeble branch.

The San Francisco Library Commission last month agreed, somewhat morosely, to dig deeper into its pockets to find the money to make up for construction bids that came in one-third higher than officials estimated.

The commission's Jan. 19 decision was the final hurdle in the on-again, off-again effort to start work on the Noe Valley-Sally Brunn Library at 451 Jersey Street, a 90-year-old, unreinforced masonry building that could easily crumble in a major earthquake.

City officials also set a Feb. 11 closing date for the branch. The news of a firm date—after being rescheduled a half-dozen times over the past two years—sent the eight-person library staff into a spasm of jubilation and a rush to get ready for moving day.

"We're trying to inventory the collection and put things in order, and throw away or send away things we might not need when we reopen," said Carol Small, the library's acting manager. The permanent collection of 30,000 books, computers, and furniture will reside in temporary storage until the branch reopens in late 2007.

The commission's action also reinvigorated local efforts to raise \$130,000 to pay for interior and other costs that city funds won't cover. The fundraising effort had been in limbo because of the ongoing renovation delays—and prompted one of the largest donors to put a \$15,000 pledge on hold.

Kim Drew, chair of the Noe Valley Library Campaign, said the group was working to resecure the \$15,000. So far, the organization has raised \$63,000 in contributions and pledges to pay for new computers, tables, chairs, shelving, and other interior fixtures.

Before shutting the doors on Saturday, Feb. 11, the library will hold a farewell party from 1:30 to 4:30 p.m. Both Drew

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Shortly after the Noe Valley Library closes, a library bookmobile will start visiting the neighborhood on Mondays and Wednesdays.



Open Hand founder Ruth Brinker is a recipient alongside such figures as Rosalynn Carter and Sandra Day O'Connor of the Jefferson Award, given annually by the American Institute for Public Service.

Photo by Lorraine Sanders

Decades later, that same determination and focus would appear again. But this time, Brinker set her sights on a mysterious and frightening disease.

Brinker, 83, is the founder of San Francisco's Project Open Hand, the first-ever non-profit organization to provide hot

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From Noe Valley With Love

Gimme a Peck. Glen Potter shares a smooch with Sidney, an African grey parrot in front of his 24th Street shop, Accent on Flowers.

Photo by Pamela Gerard

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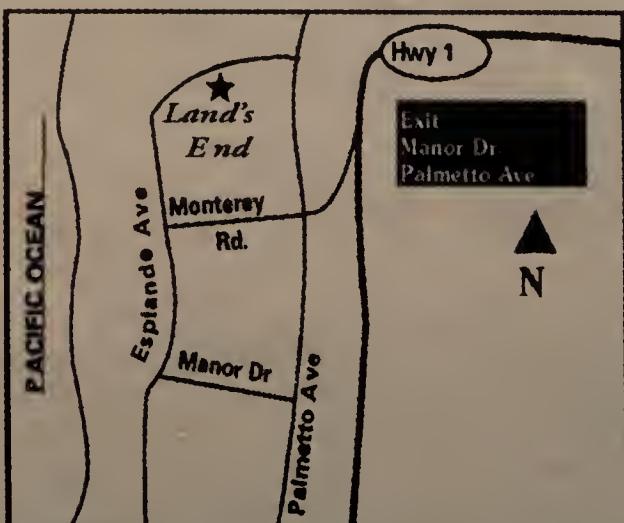
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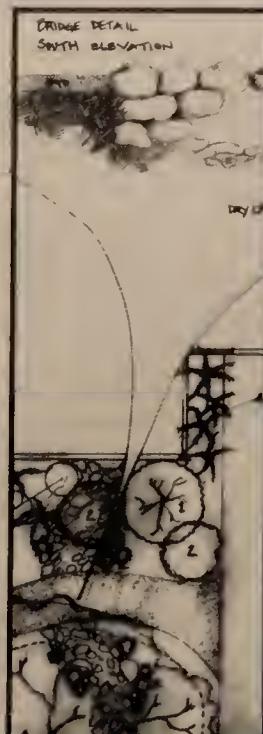
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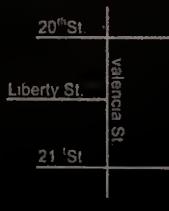
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LETTERS 39¢

We Deserve a Good Grocery

Editor:

I am responding to two letters published in the October 2005 *Voice* ["A Housing Project—That's the Ticket!" by James Keefer; "Mollie Stone's Too Expensive" by John Hirschberger]. Both concerned the proposed sale of Bell Market.

I think Mr. Keefer's idea of converting the store to low-cost housing is absurd and would be a great disservice to the community. How can a neighborhood survive without a grocery store? Where does he propose we shop for food in Noe Valley?

We deserve a good place to shop for good-quality food. As it is, I drive to the Whole Foods store on Fourth Street once a week. (I also go to Drewes on Church for meat and fish, and I buy as much as I can from the farmers' market on 24th.)

Mr. Hirschberger, who wants an Albertsons or a Safeway because he thinks they have reasonable prices, might be interested to know that Whole Foods' prices on many things are better than or at least competitive with Bell Market's. And the fact that Whole Foods treats its employees well should appeal to his socially responsible side.

Alec Hemer
Church Street

Who Is Peter Gabel?

Editor:

I would like to ask a few questions and make a few points regarding the two-year-old comedic saga surrounding Real Food Company. First of all, I know I am not the only local wondering about the relationship between Peter Gabel, his comrades, and the *Voice* editorial staff. Who

is Peter Gabel? Why has his narrow view on this subject been treated as gospel by *Voice* staff? Local friends and I have a running bet as to whether he is (a) a union organizer or (b) a trust fund baby or (c) whether he lives in a tent in someone's back yard. It is obvious he does not work for a business entity, because there is no company in existence that could withstand his moral/political scrutiny or purity of thought and purpose.

Gabel remarks, regarding the Allens' living in Marin County, that they are "absentee landlords." Gee, Peter, should they live in the store, or would it be okay if they lived above it, on the roof?

He describes the sale of the Real Food property to Nutraceutical Corporation as a "bizarre turn of events." No doubt, Peter, it probably means they are not going to run out on the lease and leave the property for you and your buddies.

It would be enlightening to reprint *Voice* articles on this subject so as to dissect the mongering (journalism would be a far too generous term) that has gone on over the past two-plus years. Every article is completely without balance and the laziest kind of reporting. The piece by Liz Highleyman in the December issue is just the latest example.

The second-to-last paragraph in Highleyman's story is most disturbing. It infers that some kind of closed-door meeting is about to happen with a small group of local citizens, Supervisor Bevan Dufty, and the Noe Valley Merchants Association. Let me be clear on this, Peter Gabel does not represent a majority of the people who live in this neighborhood, and he sure as hell does not represent me. As far

as I can tell, he has not been elected to anything. It is obvious he has absolutely no interest in what is best for the business community here—unless keeping receipts in an old sock under the counter instead of a cash register would be considered a good thing. Or perhaps a good thing would be a 24th Street that resembles San Pablo Avenue.

Regarding any communication the merchants association wants to undertake with Nutraceutical, the opening question probably wants to be something like, "What can we do as a group to facilitate you reopening your store on 24th Street?"

Doug Lockyer

Weird Dog Owners Abound

Editor:

I can completely relate to Mary McFadden's letter about the tied-up dogs on 24th Street ["You Have Nothing to Lose But Your Chains," December 2005]. One day I decided to ride my bike to Walgreen's, and I locked my bicycle to a bike rack. When I came back, there was a fairly good-sized dog tied to the bike rack. He decided to get temperamental and not let me unlock my bike. Finally, this woman with two kids and a stroller came out and got the dog.

I don't know what she was thinking. Of all places to tie up a dog. She did not even care that she inconvenienced me, much less scared me with her dog.

So there are weird dog owners in downtown San Jose, too.

Sherri Adams
San Jose resident

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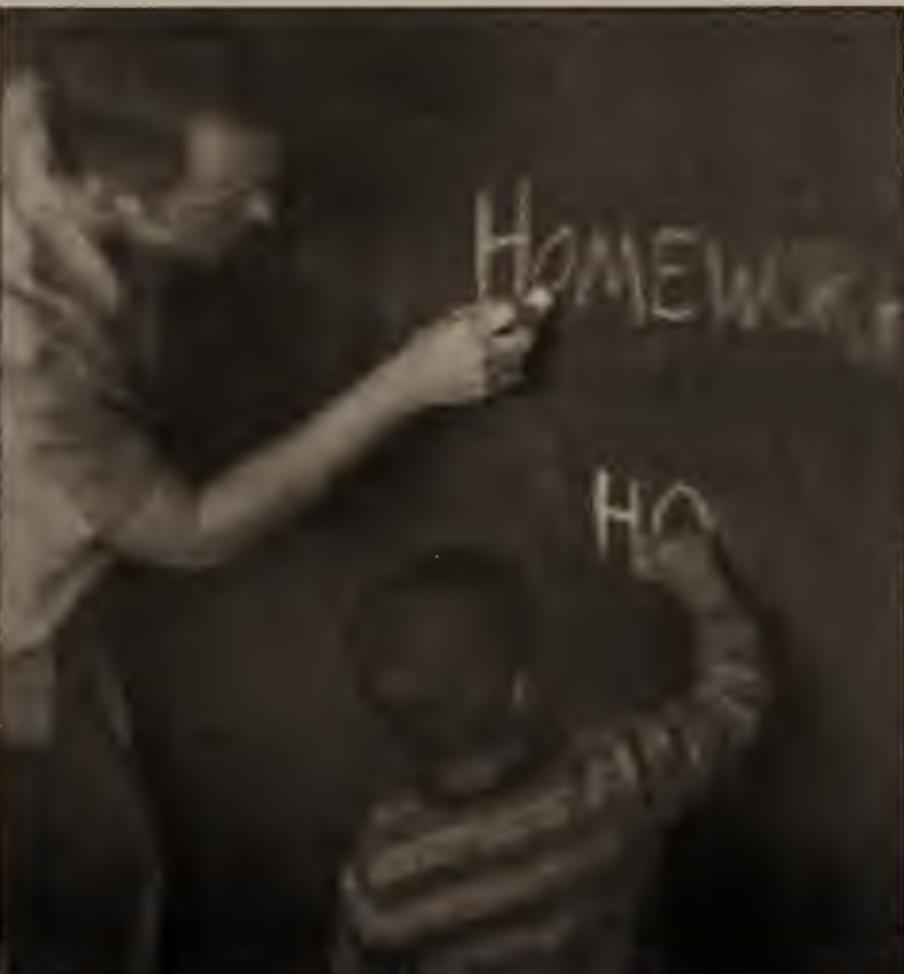


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LETTERS 39¢

For the Record Books

Editor:

Thanks for the article that appeared in the *Noe Valley Voice* in the November 2005 issue, "The Longest Running Football Game in Noe," by Bob Oaks. I worked with Bob on much of the information and past history of the A-Bowl, played at Alvarado School since 1947. It brought back memories of the time when many of us resided in the Noe Valley.

By mistake I left out two players who have been regular participants. Ted Hayes has been involved since 1951, and John Leonard since 1958. I have been getting a lot of ribbing regarding my omission.

Lou Barberini
Danville, California



Ted Hayes proudly displays "the Duck," the prize trophy in the A-Bowl football game held on Alvarado School's playground each Thanksgiving. At this year's championship, Hayes' Three-A's wallop the Red-A's by a score of 40 to 15.

block, between 21st Street and Hill, and not to the second part of the block, with addresses 851 to 899, from Hill to 22nd Street." This statement contains errors that may mislead your readers.

Neither the 800-850 nor 850-900 blocks of Sanchez Street ever had petitions filed to request utility undergrounding, and thus were never covered in legislation that earmarked funds roughly eight years ago. The current utility undergrounding project includes Hill Street but not Sanchez 800. That block—mine—has a truly unique set of circumstances.

Sanchez 800 is sandwiched between

21st Street, which was undergrounded years ago, and Hill Street, which is currently being undergrounded. PG&E's design for clearing the above-ground wires from Hill Street calls for trenching and burying the wires on the east side of Sanchez 800 up to the mid-block pole.

Since Sanchez 800 is short and because there are no overhead connections to the residences on the west side, only two overhead poles, with one span of wire, will remain. Further, these two wooden poles will be "orphaned" above ground, since utilities in all directions—north, south, east, and west—will be underground. (And this ugly sight is directly across from the spectacular viewpoint bench enjoyed by so many.)

At the same time, gas pipe replacement—planned separately by PG&E—requires the utility to extend the trench on the east side of Sanchez 800 another 50 feet or so north. Thus, the trench passes by all the residences on the east side of Sanchez 800. To underground the poles and wires on this block will require *no additional sidewalk or street trenching*. In the entire city, that attribute is unique to this block.

I have worked on this issue for 2½ years—circulating petitions, writing letters, speaking with PG&E engineers, and working with Bevan Dufty's office. We finally have all the major parties in agreement: to allow the residents on the east side of Sanchez 800 to connect to the new underground wires, remove the overhead wires, and replace the two large wooden poles with graceful new streetlamps. The residents will pay somewhat more to connect their own homes to the trench than those officially included in the project, but it will be worth it.

Unfortunately, since this extended area of work is not part of the previously legislated area, the participation of the resi-

dents must be voluntary. And in that, I am sad to report, one homeowner refuses to participate. The rest of the block has volunteered to pay all the connection costs for this person, but he is still holding out. The city is about to cancel the agreement, and a wonderful opportunity to beautify the area—at almost no cost to the city or ratepayers—will be lost.

It is sad and ironic that one difficult homeowner can cause so much damage. Meanwhile, the residents of the 850 block of Sanchez remain desperate to gain this same beautification.

Mark Miller
Sanchez Street

It Was Such a Treat

Dear 24th Street Merchants:

On behalf of all the St. Philip's School teachers and staff, I would like to thank you for opening your stores to our students on Halloween. Halloween is such an exciting day for the children, and we are grateful for your continuing support of our trick-or-treating parade. Each year, the students look forward to their trip down 24th Street.

Thanks again for keeping this tradition alive for our students. See you next year.

Kelly Pheatt
Kindergarten teacher
St. Philip's School

LETTERS to the EDITOR

THE VOICE welcomes your letters to the editor. Write the *Noe Valley Voice*, 1021 Sanchez Street, San Francisco, CA 94114. Or e-mail editor@noevaluey voice.com. Please include your name, address, and phone number. (Anonymous letters will not be considered for publication.) Be aware that letters may be edited for brevity or clarity. We look forward to hearing from you.

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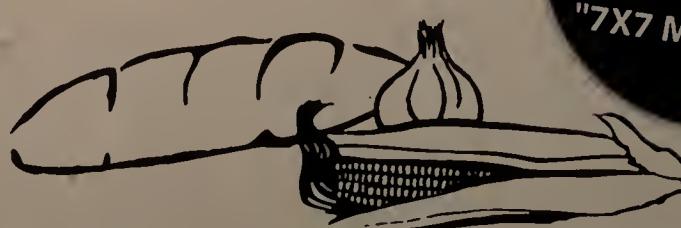
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Groups Shopping For a 'Good' Grocery Store

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

about the lack of a store along outer Church Street. Mikeytom, located at Church and Day, was forced to close in 2003 after the building's owner demanded a large rent increase. The long-term vacancy has "really left a blight on the neighborhood," Rosen said.

Former Mikeytom co-owner Tom Maravilla, who attended the meeting, told the group he and his partner, Mike Meischke, definitely were interested in operating another grocery store in the neighborhood. "In my fantasy world, we'd take over all three," Maravilla said, referring to Bell on 24th and the Castro and South Van Ness Cala stores.

Maravilla later said he had spoken with the owners of Drewes Brothers meat market about developing a cooperative venture. "I think we would be successful," he said, "because we know what the neighborhood wants and we know how to listen."

Moving Forward in the Bell Space

As the meeting wore on, the participants appeared to reach consensus: Given the impasse with Nutraceutical and the Church Street store, the most positive course might be to seek a community-friendly grocer to move into Bell's space.

Peter Gabel, of NVCSJ, who had talked briefly about his group's ongoing efforts to pressure Nutraceutical to negotiate with the community and offer restitution to Real Food's fired employees, displayed a thick stack of letters from Noe Valley residents pledging to boycott a reopened Real Food. But, he said, he had no appetite for a boycott "while 24th

Street still needs resuscitation."

Agreeing with the others at the table, Gabel said he hoped the three groups, working in concert with Supervisor Dufty, could "form a force from the neighborhood and coalesce around a good buyer for Bell." If the new store were successful, Gabel said to much applause, "Nutraceutical might be priced out of the market and forced to move."

"Nothing would make this neighborhood happier than to get a good, locally owned grocery in that space," Dufty agreed. But, he cautioned, "We have to get real pretty fast and put some money on the table. I'm worried if we hang on too long, Kroger will move ahead with someone else."

Meeting participants brought up the possibility of getting financial backing from the city, as well as involving a local bank such as Sterling. Dufty said he would approach the Mayor's Office of Economic Development to see what kinds of assistance might be available.

The group then formed a steering committee, composed of the four panelists, who said they'd solicit support from the Noe Valley Merchants and Professionals Association and start surveying neighborhood residents to determine what they wanted in a new store.

Several people stressed the need for a reasonably priced market that would serve residents at all income levels. "Everyone in Noe Valley isn't a millionaire," said May. "Whoever comes in needs to understand who we really are."

The next grocery summit will take place Monday, Feb. 16, from 7:30 to 9 p.m., at St. Philip's Hall on Diamond Street between 24th and Elizabeth. Interested parties can offer their input at the meeting or send comments by e-mail to rambooks@pacbell.net or by mail to Friends of Noe Valley, P.O. Box 460953, San Francisco, CA 94146. □

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City Frees Up Parking Spots on 24th Street

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Brian Dunleavy, who worked with fellow merchants on the parking request. "That was just ridiculous. This change is good for everyone."

"Part of the vibrancy of a commercial district is parking turnover and availability for people who want to come into the neighborhood for short periods," added Merchants Association President Carol Yenne.

Yenne said the organization, in conjunction with Supervisor Bevan Dufty's office, notified merchants prior to the change and did not encounter any resistance. She credited the DPT's Toni Coe with playing an instrumental role in making the changes a reality.

"The DPT tried to find the right balance to meet the needs of residents, shoppers, and merchants," Yenne told the *Voice*. "Now there will be fewer commercial spaces, but in locations that make more sense. The extra afternoon and evening hours will help the restaurants especially."

Diagonal Parking Travels to Clipper

Meanwhile, the Merchants Association is working to extend the recently es-

tablished diagonal parking zone on Castro Street—which now stretches from Jersey to 25th Street—to encompass the block between 25th and Clipper bordering James Lick Middle School.

The group would like to see diagonal parking between 24th Street and Jersey as well, but acknowledges that this is a bigger logistical challenge, due to a bus stop and the entrance to Walgreen's parking lot in that block. On Dufty's recommendation, "we decided for now to take the easier route," said Yenne.

Merchants are also asking the city to install meters or establish a two-hour parking zone covering the first six to eight existing diagonal slots on the block from Jersey to 25th. Currently, there are no limits on how long one may park in these spaces.

"We want to encourage movement, so people will not stay there all day," said Isa Muhamieh, who runs Isa's Salon on the east side of the block.

For now, shopkeepers are content to see the commercial parking changes. The city was in the process of changing meter signs and repainting curbs as the *Voice* went to press in late January. □



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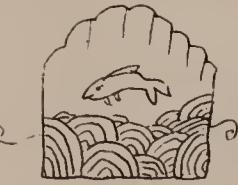
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Library Closing for 2-Year Renovation

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

and Small invite the neighborhood to come take a last look at a much-loved institution, named for Sally Brunn, a Hoffman Avenue resident who worked tirelessly to save the branch in the 1980s.

Earthquake-Proofing Long Overdue

Construction crews will take over the site two or three weeks after the library closes—nearly 17 years after the deadly Loma Prieta earthquake rattled through the Bay Area and pointed out the urgency to upgrade the library.

"I'm thrilled and I'm greatly relieved," said Debra Niemann, a neighborhood activist and library champion. "Now we can actually dig dirt."

Niemann said several local organizations deserved credit for keeping pressure on the city. But she said District 8 Supervisor Bevan Dufty played a major, behind-the-scenes role in guiding the project through financial barriers. "It wouldn't have happened except for Bevan Dufty," said Niemann. "He's been with us every step of the way, making sure our voices were heard and that they took us seriously."

The overhaul will make the library less vulnerable in a major quake, as well as improve aesthetic and working conditions at the branch. The renovations will include seismic strengthening, energy-efficient and technological upgrades, improvements for handicapped patrons, a new full-service elevator, new bathrooms, better lighting and bookshelf space, and enhanced work areas for library staffers.

The remodel will not tamper with the main architectural details of the two-story Beaux Arts building, which has a Spanish-style facade of brick and terra cotta. The building cost \$45,500 when it was completed in 1916 under the patronage of philanthropist Andrew Carnegie.

Following the 1989 earthquake, a city study found that the building posed "a clear and present danger"—ironically the title of the most popular book in the nation that year. The structure received a highest possible earthquake hazard

rating of 4.

In November 2000, San Francisco voters approved Proposition A, the Branch Library Improvement Program (BLIP), a \$105.9 million bond measure to renovate 19 of the city's 26 branches.

Noe Valley residents and Carey & Company, an architectural firm known for its historic preservation work, meticulously worked out a retrofit blueprint. But their endeavor stalled in early 2005 as the project ran into financial trouble as construction costs escalated.

The delays rolled over into last month's Library Commission meeting, which drew about 50 Noe Valley residents who sought to block any attempt to stop the retrofit or lower costs by chipping away at the original design.

"There is not another alternative but to move forward to keep this architectural treasure," Dufty told the commission. "People worked hard...to keep [it]."

'Perfect Storm' Swamps Estimate

Finance specialists initially estimated that the construction portion of the \$5.7 million project would total \$2,819,000. But officials were stunned when they opened the contractors' bids two days before Christmas and found that the lowest of three proposals was \$3,770,000 (from L. C. General Engineering & Construction, Inc., of San Francisco). The amount was \$950,000—or about a third—more than officials calculated it would be.

Speaking at the commission meeting, Marilyn Thompson, head of the San Francisco Public Library's bond program, explained that the city ran into a "a perfect storm" of problems: rising costs of concrete and steel, a building boom in China, and Hurricane Katrina repair work that drained the pool of potential contractors.

WATCH FOR THE BOOKMOBILE

The Noe Valley-Sally Brunn Library's two-year closure for seismic renovation doesn't mean you'll have to leave the neighborhood to find a copy of *Charlotte's Web* or *A Million Little Pieces*. City officials have set up interim services that will start shortly after the library closes. They've also extended hours and services at other branches.

The interim services so far include:

- Bookmobile service on Elizabeth Street near Diamond (in front of St. Philip's School) on Monday and Wednesday, 10:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- Preschool story time and lapsits held weekly—location pending.
- Extended hours at the Eureka Valley-Harvey Milk Library, 3555 16th Street near Market.
- Hold materials will be routed to the Mission Branch Library, on 24th near Valencia Street. Patrons can designate a different pickup location through the San Francisco Library's web site, www.sfpl.org, or make a request at the service desk of any branch.

For more information on interim services, call 557-4353.

ing permit application was set to expire in April.

Thompson gave the commission three options:

- Put the project up for another round of bidding.
- Redesign the project and dramatically cut back the scope of the renovations.
- Find funds to pay for the extra costs and complete the renovations as initially designed.

Residents Say Spend the Money

City Librarian Luis Herrera urged the commission to dip into the bond program's emergency reserve fund and get on with the renovations now. But with many other libraries preparing for renovations and facing possible higher costs, several commissioners said they were worried about setting a precedent of using reserve funds. Yet they acknowledged that the Noe Valley project had been in limbo far too long.

Before making its decision, the commission got an earful from Noe Valley residents.

"The library is not just for kids. All of us baby boomers will be happy in 20 years to have that library to go to," said Georgia Schuttish, a Duncan Street resident who moved into the neighborhood in 1986.

Schuttish said delaying the work would cost more in the future and that the commission "might as well go ahead and spend the money now and get it done."

David Brodwin, another longtime resident, agreed. "It pains me to see the mess we're in," he said. "You can't increment your way out of this. We've got to get out of this loop," and "we've got to do it now."

At the end of the day, the "do it now" forces were persuasive, and the commission voted to extract an additional \$825,000 from the reserve fund. (The full \$950,000 was not necessary, since Herrera had removed several minor items from the renovation plans prior to the meeting.)

The project is now expected to total \$5.7 million—\$3.7 million for construction and \$2 million in other costs, such as hazardous material abatement, architect fees, and permits.

Let's hope the renovations will be worth every penny. □



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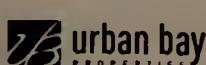
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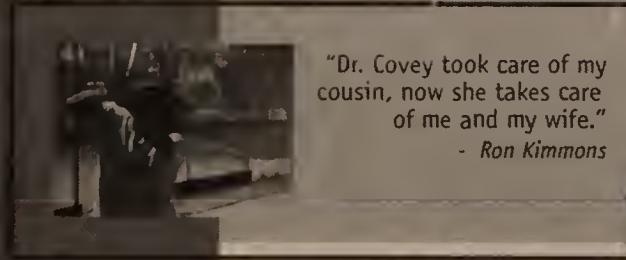


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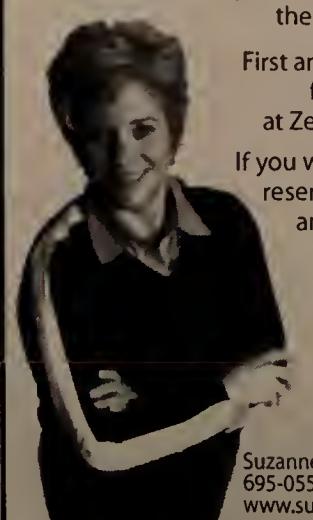
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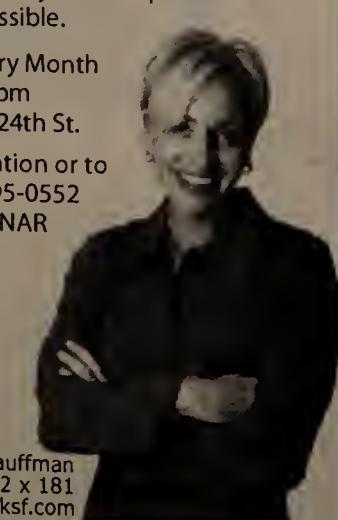
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Ruth Brinker's Gift: Open Hand

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

meals, groceries, and nutrition counseling to people with HIV/AIDS. Twenty years ago, Open Hand served only those stricken with AIDS. But beginning in 2000, the organization expanded its eligibility requirements to include all homebound and critically ill Bay Area residents. Cities around the world have since modeled similar programs after Project Open Hand.

Brinker, who is a 2005 recipient of a Jefferson Award for public service, lived in Bernal Heights for many years, but spent last fall living in Noe Valley with her daughter and son-in-law, Lisa and Patrick Monk, after a fire damaged her longtime residence. In December 2005, Brinker relocated to the Laguna Grove Care Senior Community in Hayes Valley.

At first glance, Brinker may seem an unlikely leader in the fight against HIV/AIDS. Petite with a wholesome look

that initially conceals her feisty sense of humor, Brinker was already a retired grandmother and widow when she started Project Open Hand in 1985. She had little money to spare. Her only business experience came from the several years she spent running her own antique shop. But she had volunteered for Meals on Wheels, and she knew how to cook.

"I have to thank my previous husband," Brinker says with her characteristic wit. "He never made any money, but he always insisted on eating delicious meals. I have to thank him, because he brought me up to be a good cook."

Brinker made the decision to start delivering meals to a small number of clients after realizing that many of the city's gay men, a community she'd gotten to know through chatting with regular customers at her antique shop, were dying not only from a little understood disease called AIDS, but also from added complications brought on by malnutrition.

At a time when many people were afraid to be in the same room with someone diagnosed with AIDS, Brinker felt no fear.

"I knew that I didn't know much about

[AIDS], and I knew that the people who were supposed to understand these things also didn't know much about it. All I could do was follow my gut," she says.

A few months after she began cooking and delivering meals, Brinker was able to move Project Open Hand into a local church and start enlisting volunteers. Within three years, what began as one woman's attempt to nurture and care for people with HIV/AIDS had grown into an organization serving 500 meals a day.

Today Project Open Hand's Polk Street headquarters houses a kitchen and food bank, and offers nutrition education services to clients. A second kitchen in Oakland serves homebound and critically ill Alameda County residents. The organization also serves lunch to seniors in over 20 San Francisco locations.

Looking back on Project Open Hand's incredible journey, Brinker says she never anticipated the program's success.

"I was really surprised at how it expanded and how appreciative people were," she says.

She is especially proud that places outside of San Francisco, including some

European countries, have developed their own meal delivery programs for people with HIV/AIDS based on Project Open Hand's model.

While Brinker is recognized for creating a revolutionary program that has grown immensely over the past two decades and served millions of meals to people in need, she still views the project with refreshing simplicity.

Brinker says, "I always try to do things that need to be done, and it seemed to me that this needed to be done, and I did it."



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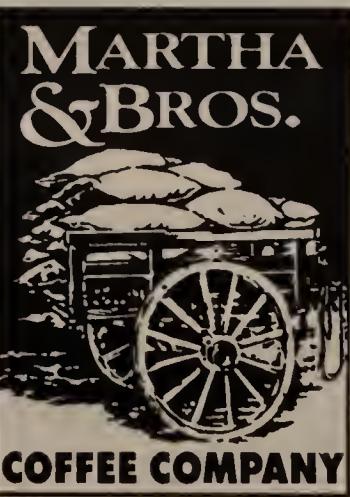
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The Cost of Living in Noe

Home Sellers Had Fun Over the Holidays

By Corrie M. Anders

In what is likely to be its last hurrah, Noe Valley's housing market staged a dazzling sales performance at the end of 2005.

Eager homebuyers closed escrow on 32 detached homes during the last two months of the year, according to sales data provided to the *Voice* by Zephyr Real Estate. Nineteen homes sold during the 2004 November–December period.

The most recent November–December total was the highest since 33 homes sold at the end of 2001, when the neighborhood's nascent real estate boom was just starting to grab attention. The sales data shows, however, that soaring prices and a gradual rise in interest rates may finally be putting the brakes on the five-year run.

Homes took a week or two longer to sell, and buyers were a tad less eager to offer the shirt off their backs. They paid an average 6 percent more than the sellers' asking price in December, and 9 percent more in November—not the 12 to 15 percent premiums buyers were willing to pay during much of 2005's red-hot market.

"We're watching the days-on-market slowly increase," said Randall Kostick, Zephyr's general sales manager. "It's an indication things aren't quite as fast and furious as they were."

Without a doubt, buyers still are throwing extra money at Noe Valley's more desirable properties. But for the most part, "people are buying at asking or below asking" prices.

The hefty load of year-end closings involved sales that were initiated in September and October. Those were the months when a large number of sellers be-

gan to put their properties on the market.

"There were a lot of sellers [in the past] who said, 'I don't want to sell because the market is going up.' Now they're getting the message that things aren't quite as crazy and that now is the time to sell," Kostick said.

The more bountiful supply of homes last fall meshed nicely with the ongoing demand from shoppers, who also sensed that the rampant appreciation had slowed.

"We've got interest rates that are still [relatively] low, buyers who've wanted to buy for the longest time, and all these properties became available," Kostick said, "and they were buying."

Not that prices were anywhere near the bargain basement. Buyers in December paid an average \$1.2 million for a Noe Valley home and nearly \$1.5 million in November. December's costliest residential property was a four-bedroom, 3 1/2-bath home in the first block of 27th Street, between Dolores and Guerrero streets. It sold in exactly three weeks for slightly more than \$2.1 million—or 11 percent more than the asking price. The most expensive detached home sold in November was a four-bedroom, two-bath residence in the 100 block of Vicksburg Street, between 23rd and Elizabeth streets. The home also closed in 21 days with a sales price of nearly \$1.5 million.

The Zephyr sales data shows 23 condominiums closed escrow in November and December of last year, compared with 13 sales during the same period in 2004. A three-bedroom, 2 1/2-bath unit with 1,500 square feet, located in the 900 block of Elizabeth Street, between Hoffman and Grand View avenues, sold in December for \$1.5 million. It was the month's most expensive condo. The costliest November sale was a three-bedroom, 2 1/2-bath unit with 1,500 square feet, located in the 200 block of Grand View, between 21st and 22nd streets. It sold in November for \$1.350,000.

December also featured a sales rarity. A 26-unit apartment building sold for \$6.6 million. The building is located in the 600 block of Alvarado Street, between Castro and Diamond streets. □

Noe Valley Home Sales*

Total Sales	No.	Low Price (\$)	High Price (\$)	Average Price (\$)	Avg. Days on Market	Sale Price As % of List Price
Single-family homes						
Dec. 2005	15	\$675,000	\$2,145,000	\$1,203,533	37	106%
Nov. 2005	17	\$860,000	\$1,465,000	\$1,145,370	28	109%
Dec. 2004	7	\$675,000	\$1,430,000	\$1,074,286	22	110%
Nov. 2004	12	\$685,000	\$1,625,000	\$1,132,042	29	110%
Condominiums						
Dec. 2005	14	\$575,000	\$1,510,000	\$890,321	42	105%
Nov. 2005	9	\$392,000	\$1,350,000	\$949,944	20	112%
Dec. 2004	2	\$1,135,000	\$1,353,000	\$1,244,000	18	116%
Nov. 2004	11	\$387,500	\$1,270,000	\$862,591	35	108%
2- to 4-unit buildings						
Dec. 2005	4	\$937,500	\$1,716,888	\$1,233,597	56	106%
Nov. 2005	4	\$1,200,000	\$1,806,000	\$1,499,262	22	102%
Dec. 2004	2	\$1,350,000	\$1,535,000	\$1,442,500	92	100%
Nov. 2004	1	\$1,301,000	\$1,301,000	\$1,301,000	38	100%
5+unit buildings						
Dec. 2005	1	\$6,160,000	\$6,160,000	\$6,160,000	99	104%
Nov. 2005	0	—	—	—	—	—
Dec. 2004	0	—	—	—	—	—
Nov. 2004	0	—	—	—	—	—

* Sales figures include all Noe Valley home sales completed during the month. In this survey, Noe Valley is defined as the area bordered by Grand View, 22nd, Guerrero, and 30th streets. The *Voice* thanks Zephyr Real Estate (www.zephyrsf.com) for supplying the sales data.

NV 2/06

Noe Valley Rents**

Type of Unit	Number in Sample	Range of Rents January 2006	Average January 2006	Average A Year Ago
Studio	5	\$ 995 – \$1,200	\$1,078 / mo.	\$1,208 / mo.
1-bedroom	14	\$1,250 – \$1,975	\$1,575 / mo.	\$1,532 / mo.
2-bedroom	14	\$1,900 – \$2,995	\$2,399 / mo.	\$2,521 / mo.
3-bedroom	12	\$2,300 – \$4,000	\$2,963 / mo.	\$2,600 / mo.
4+bedroom	4	\$3,900 – \$7,500	\$5,150 / mo.	\$4,950 / mo.

** This survey was based on a sample of 49 Noe Valley listings appearing on www.craigslist.com Jan. 10–17, 2006.

NV 2/06

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Who to Call at City HallFor Problems With...

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Graffiti		415-241-WASH
Illegal Dumping (litter, dog poop)		415-28-CLEAN (282-5326)
Potholes	potholes@ci.sf.ca.us	415-695-2100 (695-2020 after 5 p.m.)
Sewer Odor	24-Hour Odor Hotline	415-695-2096
Tree Hazards and Trimming	Bureau of Street Environmental Services www.ci.sf.ca.us/sfdpw/trees	415-695-2017
Lost or Injured Animals	Animal Care and Control	415-554-9405
Traffic Signals Out		415-550-2736
Missing or Damaged Street Signs		415-554-9780
Abandoned Vehicles		415-553-9817
Aggressive Panhandling		415-553-0123
Illegal Parking	DPT Dispatch	415-553-1200
Someone Needing Detox	Mobile Assistance Patrol (MAP)	415-431-7400
Homeless Needing Help (link to services)		sfpdhomeless@sbcglobal.net
Utility Undergrounding	Department of Public Works undergrounding@sfgov.org	415-554-4860
Whistleblower Hotline		415-554-2489

Other Handy Numbers

Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Services	415-558-7111
District 8 Supervisor Bevan Dufty	415-554-6968

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POLICE B E A T

Police Beat is a roundup of crimes and other police incidents in Noe Valley. "Noe Valley" is defined as the area bordered by Grand View, 21st, Guerrero, and 30th streets. The neighborhood straddles two police districts, so the December 2005 crime log was culled from incident reports filed at Mission and Ingleside police stations.

Friday, Dec. 2

Theft by Use of Credit Card: Reported 3 p.m., 200 block of Jersey Street

Warrant Arrest: Reported 9:16 p.m., 24th and Vicksburg streets; arrest, booked

Saturday, Dec. 3

Malicious Mischief, Graffiti: Reported 11 a.m. and 10:30 p.m., Vicksburg and 22nd streets

Sunday, Dec. 4

Petty Theft from Locked Auto: Reported 5 p.m., 200 block of 30th Street

Burglary, Forcible Entry: Reported 5 p.m., 3700 block of 26th Street

Battery: Reported 9:30 p.m., 800 block of Diamond Street

Monday, Dec. 5

Lost Property: Reported noon, Clipper and Castro streets

Grand Theft of Property: Reported 4 p.m., 3900 block of 24th Street

Wednesday, Dec. 7

Grand Theft from Locked Auto: Reported 12:55 a.m., 300 block of Vicksburg Street

Injury Inflicted on Cohabitee: Reported 6:54 a.m., 600 block of Clipper Street; arrest, booked

Traffic Violation: Reported 8 a.m., San Jose Avenue and Valley Street; arrest

Traffic Violation: Reported 8:02 a.m., San Jose Avenue and 29th Street; arrest

Suspended or Revoked Driver's License: Reported 8:41 a.m., 27th and Dolores streets; arrest

Traffic Violation: Reported 9 a.m., San Jose Avenue and Valley Street; arrest

Traffic Violation: Reported 9:20 a.m., San Jose Avenue and Valley Street; arrest

Traffic Violation/Resisting Arrest: Reported 9:50 a.m., 26th and Church streets; arrest

Traffic Violation: Reported 4:30 p.m., Guerrero and 28th streets; arrest

Thursday, Dec. 8

Theft by Use of Credit Card: Reported 12:01 a.m., 2000 block of Castro Street

Burglary of Apartment House, Forcible Entry: Reported 7:30 a.m., first block of Jersey Street

Lost or Stolen License Plate: Reported 9 p.m., 3800 block of 24th Street

SAFETY TIP

From Lt. Sharon McNally
Mission Station

Always be aware of your surroundings. Make sure you see someone who may be approaching you. If you get a bad feeling about someone, cross the street, go into an open establishment, or just move away from the subject. Make eye contact with them. Most criminals rely on the element of surprise. Once you make eye contact, the surprise is gone and they may wait and choose another victim.

Friday, Dec. 9

Grand Theft from Locked Auto: Reported 1:05 a.m., Dolores and Cesar Chavez streets
Aggravated Assault with a Deadly Weapon: Reported 8:50 a.m., 3600 block of 24th Street
Battery: Reported 9 a.m., 1200 block of Noe Street

Missing Adult: Reported 11 a.m., 1400 block of Guerrero Street

Malicious Mischief, Vandalism: Reported 8 p.m., 1400 block of Dolores Street

Burglary of Apartment House, Forcible Entry: Reported 11:30 p.m., 700 block of Castro Street

Saturday, Dec. 10

Miscellaneous Investigation: Reported 8:40 a.m., 200 block of Day Street

Disturbing the Peace: Reported 4 p.m., 1300 block of Church Street

Stolen Truck: Reported 6 p.m., Noe and Day streets

Monday, Dec. 12

Felony Check Forgery: Reported 11:30 a.m., 2000 block of Castro Street

Grand Theft from Locked Auto: Reported 9 p.m., Noe and 24th streets

Petty Theft from Locked Auto: Reported 10 p.m., Valley and Church streets

Burglary of Apartment House, Forcible Entry: Reported 10:12 p.m., 600 block of Grand View Avenue

Tuesday, Dec. 13

Death Report, Cause Unknown: Reported 3 a.m., 300 block of 28th Street

False ID to Peace Officer/Driver's License Suspended or Revoked: Reported 7 p.m., Dolores and 30th streets; arrest

Wednesday, Dec. 14

Possession of Narcotics Paraphernalia: Reported 9:30 a.m., 600 block of Dolores Street; arrest, booked

Domestic Violence/Suspicious Occurrence: Reported 5:03 p.m., 200 block of Castro Street

Battery: Reported 7:16 p.m., 3900 block of 24th Street; arrest

Thursday, Dec. 15

Petty Theft from Unlocked Auto: Reported 11:30 a.m., 3700 block of Cesar Chavez Street

Burglary of Residence, Unlawful Entry: Reported 12:30 p.m., 400 block of Collingwood Street

Petty Theft, Shoplifting: Reported 4 p.m., 3900 block of 24th Street; arrest

Trespassing: Reported 6:10 p.m., 2000 block of Castro Street

Friday, Dec. 16

False Evidence of Vehicle Registration: Reported 9:58 a.m., 4000 block of 25th Street

Malicious Mischief, Vandalism: Reported 2 p.m., 300 block of Eureka Street

Grand Theft of Property: Reported 5:20 p.m., 500 block of Dolores Street

Saturday, Dec. 17

Death Report, Natural Causes: Reported 2:30 p.m., 400 block of 30th Street

Sunday, Dec. 18

Grand Theft from a Building: Reported 10:30 p.m., 3500 block of 21st Street

Monday, Dec. 19

Lost Property: Reported 2 p.m., 500 block of San Jose Avenue

Lost Property: Reported 3 p.m., Church and 29th streets

Lost Property: Reported 4 p.m., 24th and Noe streets

Possession of Narcotics Paraphernalia/False ID to Peace Officer/Warrant Arrest: Reported 5:26 p.m., Church and 29th streets; arrest, booked

Grand Theft from Locked Auto: Reported 9 p.m., 300 block of Valley Street

Tuesday, Dec. 20

Suspicious Occurrence: Reported 3:08

a.m., Hoffman Avenue and 24th Street

Petty Theft of Property: Reported 11 a.m., Noe and 23rd streets

Make or Pass Fictitious Checks: Reported noon, 600 block of Duncan Street; prosecuted by outside agency

Grand Theft from Locked Auto: Reported 7 p.m., 700 block of Noe Street

Wednesday, Dec. 21

Theft by Use of Credit Card: Reported 10 a.m., 800 Elizabeth Street

Burglary, Unlawful Entry: Reported 4:15 p.m., 1200 block of Noe Street

Grand Theft from Locked Auto: Reported 10 p.m., 24th and Vicksburg streets

Friday, Dec. 23

Missing Adult: Reported 12:30 p.m., 400 block of 30th Street

Strongarm Robbery on the Street: Reported 11:07 p.m., 24th and Guerrero streets

Saturday, Dec. 24

Burglary of Residence, Forcible Entry: Reported 5:30 a.m., 3900 block of 22nd Street

Sunday, Dec. 25

Lost Property/Theft by Use of Credit Card: Reported 2:30 a.m., 1400 block of Castro Street

Petty Theft from Unlocked Auto: Reported 1 p.m., Duncan and Church streets

Aggravated Assault with Bodily Force: Reported 2:55 p.m., 22nd and Noe streets

Suspicious Occurrence: Reported 5:25 p.m., 600 block of Castro Street

Tuesday, Dec. 27

Possession of Firecrackers: Reported 2:30 p.m., 600 block of Diamond Street

Wednesday, Dec. 28

Embezzlement, Petty Theft: Reported 9 p.m., 400 block of Hoffman Avenue

Thursday, Dec. 29

Grand Theft from Locked Auto: Reported 4 p.m., 22nd and Church streets

Threats Against Life/Resisting Arrest: Reported 9 p.m., 600 block of San Jose Avenue; arrest, booked

Friday, Dec. 30

Vandalism of Vehicles: Reported 8:30 p.m., Guerrero and Cesar Chavez streets

Saturday, Dec. 31

Malicious Mischief, Vandalism: Reported

6:18 a.m., 21st and Sanchez streets

Injury Inflicted on Cohabitee: Reported 12:43 p.m., 100 block of Jersey Street; arrest, booked

Malicious Mischief, Breaking Windows: Reported 5 p.m., 3600 block of 23rd Street

Vandalism of Vehicles: Reported 9 p.m., 500 block of Elizabeth Street

Obscene Phone Calls, Threats Against Life: Reported 11:57 p.m., 4200 block of 24th Street

The Voice thanks Police Officer Andrew MacLennan for providing incident reports for this month's Police Beat. The reports were sorted by Voice staffer Karol Barske.

How to Contact the SFPD

Noe Valley residents and merchants are invited to attend police-community meetings held monthly in the Mission and Ingleside police districts.

Ingleside meetings take place on the third Tuesday of the month, 7 p.m., at Ingleside Station, 1 Sgt. John Young Lane, off the 2000 block of San Jose Avenue. Mission community meetings are held on the last Tuesday of the month, 6 p.m., at Mission Station, 630 Valencia Street near 17th Street.

Noe Valley residents who live or work north of Cesar Chavez Street (within the Mission Police District) may phone Mission Station at 558-5400 or e-mail SFPDMissionStation@ci.sf.ca.us. To report anonymously on drugs, gangs, or other crimes, call Mission Station's hotline at 575-4444. For online reporting, go to www.sfgov.org/site/police.

Residents and merchants in Upper Noe Valley—south of Cesar Chavez Street—may contact Ingleside Station by calling 404-4000 or e-mailing SFPDInglesideStation@ci.sf.ca.us.

The Ingleside anonymous tip line is 587-8984. To sign up for Ingleside Station's daily crime e-newsletter, e-mail Captain Paul Chignell at Paul_Chignell@ci.sf.ca.us.

To report a crime in progress, call 911. To report a non-emergency situation in San Francisco, call 553-0123.

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Learn How to Put Out Fires (Set by the SFFD)

If you see a group of people deliberately setting fires at the Noe Valley Farmers' Market this month, don't worry—they're not arsonists. They're actually San Francisco firefighters out to teach Noe Valley residents a valuable safety lesson.

The unusual occasion is the kickoff to a yearlong campaign to help neighborhood residents become better prepared to fend for themselves in the event of a natural or man-made disaster.

The self-help campaign is the brainchild of the Noe Valley Preparedness Committee (NVPC), which was formed in October as an offshoot of the residents group Friends of Noe Valley. The committee hopes to help neighbors take a step-by-step approach to disaster readiness.

"We're encouraging people to focus on one thing each month," said project coordinator Mindy Kershner.

Each of 10 months during 2006, the committee will highlight one aspect of a personal preparedness plan—such as stocking an earthquake kit, knowing how to reach family and elderly neighbors, or getting up to speed on CPR and other first-aid skills.

February—which the group has dubbed "Light My Fire and Put It Out Safely Month"—will center on fire extinguishers. And firefighters working with the citywide Neighborhood Emergency Response Team (NERT) program will be the featured public attraction.

The San Francisco Fire Department will set small blazes and then give residents—from kids to seniors—an opportunity to put them out. Representatives

NOE NERT TRAINING IN MARCH

The Neighborhood Emergency Response Team (NERT), a San Francisco Fire Department program created after the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake, aims to prepare residents to help themselves during the crucial first 72 hours after a disaster. NERT offers free disaster-preparedness training on a rotating basis in neighborhoods throughout the city.

The next NERT training in Noe Valley will begin March 4 and continue for three consecutive Saturdays, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., at the Noe Valley Ministry, 1021 Sanchez Street.

If weekday evenings better suit your schedule, another nearby class will start Feb. 27 and run for six consecutive Mondays from 6 to 9 p.m. at Dolores Plaza Condominiums, 1839 15th Street, between Dolores and Guerrero.

The 18-hour training covers earthquake awareness, hazard mitigation, fire suppression, first aid, light search and rescue, and team organization. Each training ends with a hands-on skills practice.

To sign up or get more information, visit the NERT web site at www.sfgov.org/sffdnert or contact Noe Valley NERT coordinator Maxine Fasulis at 415-641-5536.

from the Arrow Fire Protection Co. will be on hand to demonstrate how to use a fire extinguisher.

"Even if you think you know how to work one, it feels different when you actually do it," said Kershner.

The tutorial will take place on Saturday, Feb. 25, at 11 a.m. sharp, at the mini-park near the Noe Valley Farmers' Market, on 24th Street between Vicksburg and Sanchez streets.

Also as part of the event, the Preparedness Committee has arranged for Tuggee's Hardware, located nearby at 3885 24th Street, to stock extra home fire extinguishers, of the type recommended by the Fire Department (10-pound "3A-40-BC" extinguishers with a hose and metal top).

"The very small ones might be good

for a small kitchen fire, but you really need something more powerful to do the job for more serious events," said Kershner. The extinguishers cost around \$30, she said.

Participants can also bring their own extinguishers, which the fire experts will

check to see if they're in good working order. There will be information on how to refill an extinguisher and about an upcoming NERT Training at the Noe Valley Ministry (see sidebar).

Meanwhile, the Preparedness Committee will start planning its March event, as well as continue to seek information about neighborhood readiness from local schools, businesses, and community groups.

The committee wants to find out what kind of preparedness plans other groups already have and whether they mesh well, or are in conflict with one another. One potential conflict has centered on the James Lick Middle School parking lot, Kershner said. The Noe Valley NERT team plans to use the parking lot as its primary post-disaster staging area. But the school also expects to use the same spot to gather its students. Further, city experts have warned that the lot's retaining wall could collapse in a major earthquake.

"We're trying to pinpoint any trouble spots," Kershner said.

If you'd like to join the effort, the next meeting of the Noe Valley Preparedness Committee will be Feb. 13, at 6:30 p.m. Contact Kershner at 377-3890 or e-mail mindytower@aol.com for the meeting location. All neighborhood residents are welcome. □

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Let BYLINES Be BYLINES

My Surprise Gift, Fangs Included

By Patrick Letellier

I got a tarantula for Christmas. It wasn't exactly the gift I was expecting, but since I've always loved insects and other critters, my partner Keith, bless his heart, bought me a giant spider, complete with hairy legs, fangs, and venom.

"Be very gentle opening this," he said, his bright eyes flashing, the brown paper bag between us on the kitchen counter. I was suddenly sure I was getting exquisite glassware, very colorful, or an Italian marble sculpture—a rutting bull perhaps, or the Pieta. Not that he'd given me anything remotely like that before. Ever.

This year he really outdid himself, I thought, wondering if the expensive

French pie pan awaiting him under the tree would suffice. I eagerly opened the bag and carefully lifted out...not my glorious new Italian art, but a clear plastic container riddled with air holes. And there, crouching at the bottom, was a poisonous spider big enough to fill the palm of my hand. *D'oh!*

After an initial gasp and some confusion ("You got me a tarantula?"), I did what you're supposed to do when you receive a gift, no matter how bizarre. "Thanks, hon," I said with a laugh. "It's just what I wanted." He was beaming. It is, after all, quite the present.

Since re-gifting was clearly out of the question, tempting as that was, my eight-legged critter was soon perched in her mini-terrarium on the mantle in the living room for all to see and "enjoy." Her starter kit came with desert soil, fake tree

bark to crawl on, and peat moss that you soak with water to keep her environment moist and humid—a happy little spider spa where she can bask, sleep, and eat crickets for the next 20 years.

I say "she," but we're guessing on gender because, hey, I ain't liftin' up her hood to check the engine. And no one asks. It's not like when you get a new puppy or kitten and right away people

I say "she," but we're guessing on gender because, hey, I ain't liftin' up her hood to check the engine.

ask if it's a boy or a girl. Instead, all the questions about my "itsy-bitsy spider," as I affectionately refer to her, are about her cage. Friends politely peer in, then rather quickly back away. "Can that get out?" one asked, deadly serious. "Can't she slide the screen off the top of the cage and climb out?" She's a spider, I explain, not a raccoon.

I wasn't enamored with her at first, either, but after a couple days she won me over. She's beautiful, in a Lily Munster kind of way, and moves with a delicate, otherworldly grace. Since she's slightly reddish—she's a Chilean Rose Hair Tarantula—we named her Magenta, which, I like to think, has a Drag Queen Meets Dracula ring to it

that suits her perfectly. But then we watched the film *Mr. and Mrs. Smith*, starring Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt, and

now we've taken to calling her Tarangelina Jolie, or Brad Bit. We also considered naming her Barbara (who'd expect that?), Lestat (Anne Rice's fanged villain), and RoseMhairy's Baby (well, for obvious reasons). Keith, inexplicably, also calls her Gidget.

"What does this say about your relationship?" asked Nello, my gay, 82-year-old neighbor, when I told him

about the gift. "Keith bought you a poisonous animal that bites," he said, arching one eyebrow theatrically. "Darling, it can't be good!"

"She was the least poisonous kind the pet store had," Keith told me later, his face a mask of brightness—as if he were conveying some welcome, happy news. "Her bite feels like a bee sting but won't send you to the hospital." Well now, that's reassuring.

It's actually a sweet gift. I had wanted a praying mantis, the voracious and sleek supermodels of the insect world, but thanks to convoluted laws in California it's easier to get plutonium from the Iranians than it is to buy a mantis for a pet.

So instead I have a tarantula.

One of my resolutions for 2006 is to be open to good things coming my way, in expected and unexpected forms. Magenta is the latter. In fact, she's way the latter. □

Patrick Letellier makes his living writing about gay culture and politics. He and his partner, Keith Hodge (who worked for many years as a bather at VIP Grooming on 24th Street), have lived on Liberty Street for two years. To check out Letellier's rants on lesbian fruit flies and other compelling topics, visit PatrickLetellier.com.



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Let BYLINES Be BYLINES

Pieces of China

By Liz Worthy

Since moving to San Francisco six years ago, I have been a member of Ruby's Clay Studio, a ceramics workshop tucked into the side of the Noe Street hill. Ruby's is like a second home, full of many good friends as well as a host of familiar clays and glazes. This August, I temporarily left the comforts of Ruby's and of San Francisco, and traveled across the globe to another ceramics studio, Sanbao Ceramic Art Institute in China. The Jingdezhen area of China, where this studio is located, is considered the birthplace of porcelain. In 2004, the region celebrated its millennial birthday, and stories from ceramicists who attended the festivities trickled back and whet my appetite for a similar adventure. So when I saw a China residency program listed in a *Ceramics Monthly* magazine, I took interest. The price—\$800 for the month—and the promise of hot summer weather were the final decision makers.

The Sanbao Ceramic Art Institute is about 20 minutes from Jingdezhen, and soon I had no doubts that, indeed, this was the porcelain capital of the world. Jingdezhen's lampposts are made from large ceramic columns decorated with a variety of designs, from blue-and-white dragons and rosy peaches to misty mountain scenes. Whole streets are lined with glaze stores, and the supermarket sells ceramics tools. Trucks and bicycles with carts roll by loaded with anything from bags of clay to six-foot-tall porcelain vases. Even the garbage is interesting. On close inspection, a pile of rubble on the street turns out to be a mass of discarded plaster casts—reliefs of eagles and the feet of Buddhas. I later learn that 60 percent of Jingdezhen's roughly one million residents work in the ceramics industry.

The Sanbao Institute is its own little ceramics oasis, a retreat from the hustle and bustle of the city. The locals come up to the studio, to eat at the restaurant, practice their English with the international residents, and enjoy the slightly cooler weather. The weather, as promised, was hot: in the 90s with high humidity. The grounds are decorated with mosaics made of broken ceramics shards, and clay sculptures poke out of recesses in the walls. A stream winds through it all and is the home of ceramic water serpents.

Both the studio and living area are broken up into a number of wooden buildings, connected with brick paths and wooden bridges. And the local craftsmen are continually adding on to the buildings. During the short month I was there, I saw them add a balcony, dig an additional fishpond, and work on

a number of smaller projects like bamboo chairs and cups. Great care has been taken to keep a traditional aesthetic, so much so that even a stack of red plastic buckets, purchased to help with studio cleanup, had to be snuck in while the director was away on a trip.

I worked alongside a handful of other residents—from places like Canada, Australia, and the Netherlands—in an open, airy studio. My workspace had a potter's wheel, two five-foot-long tables, a set of shelves, and a large window. Out my window was a view of birds and butterflies flitting over a rice paddy, and beyond that was the road where cars and scooters zoomed and others lazily biked by, sometimes three to a bicycle and often holding umbrellas to shade themselves from the sun.

When the master potters came to visit, they'd examine what I'd made with great interest and amusement. "Hmmm," they'd say, and it didn't take any knowledge of Mandarin to know what they were thinking.

I had more studio space than I had ever had, and I planned to utilize all of it. I also had access to a huge pile of porcelain, which I imagined would be replenished as soon as I reached the bottom—in about a week. I would make larger-than-life ceramic chairs, huge dragon sculptures, and many other creatures. I would make sets of cups and plates, and after a little practice, some large vases. The only challenge I foresaw was getting it all back to San Francisco.

A week later, my concerns had shifted. My wares consisted of a row of squat, lopsided thick pots and a pile of broken, hand-built objects. When the master potters came to visit, they'd examine what I'd made with great interest and amusement. "Hmmm," they'd say, and it didn't take any knowledge of Mandarin to know what they were thinking. The porcelain clay was giving me problems. It has a different set of properties than the grittier clay I'm accustomed to in the U.S.

I began taking to heart the advice of the other residents who had been there longer than I had. I also visited the neighboring studio where the master potters worked (which I suppose was the reason I was in China in the first place). One master potter was throwing large vases the traditional way, on a kick wheel, while another had a modern electric wheel and was making mugs and teapots for a production line. I couldn't believe we were working from the same pile of clay. We had no common language, so I just watched them closely and tried to pick up helpful things. For instance, I saw that they were holding thin pieces of cotton in their hands that helped their fingers glide upon their pots. They also turned the wheel much slower than I did, and they threw the clay on plaster bats rather than directly on the wheel head. The bat was then removed with the pot so that the pot was less likely to collapse when moved from wheel to shelf.



Liz Worthy poses with one of the fish she painstakingly created at the Sanbao Ceramic Art Institute in China.

I concentrated on applying their techniques and did improve some, but to be fair, they'd been doing this most of their lives, and even back home the wheel had never been my forte.

Fed up one afternoon, I wiped my hands on my apron and went outside. Soon, I found myself hunched over the fishpond, pondering which fish in the submerged basket might make their way to the dinner table that evening. I realized that the fish, low-lying and somewhat squat, like most of my current work, were perhaps the perfect object for my ceramic inspiration.

I returned to the studio and molded slabs of clay over rolls of newspaper. This worked, but the fish lacked definition. On another trip to the fishpond, I became interested in their scales. When I returned to the studio I began fooling around with how to make this texture. I

arrived at a system of making my fish scale by scale. The process was slow but worthwhile; I was more in control of the form. I would throw the fish head on the wheel, then attach a few rows of scales as I held it in my hand. Then I would place the head looking down into a teapot and turn the teapot round and round as I built up row upon row of scales. As I worked, I realized that I'd stumbled upon a way to make tall pieces. I did wind up making a couple of tall vases using this technique, but for the most part I stuck with fish.

After this breakthrough, when the master potters stopped by to see how my work was progressing, they didn't have to search so much for the proper response. They pointed and smiled and said *yú*. *Yú* meant fish, I learned. I'd try to repeat it, and I'd get it wrong every time, even after much coaching. Could this word really be so difficult? Could the clay really be so hard to get accustomed to? I'd figured out how to make fish, and at the moment that was all that mattered. □

*Liz Worthy will display her *yú* and other ceramic works at a solo show Feb. 3–20 at Ruby's Clay Studio & Gallery, 552A Noe Street, between 18th and 19th streets. The show opens with a reception on Friday, Feb. 3, from 6 to 9 p.m.*

Let Bylines Be Bylines

The Noe Valley Voice welcomes submissions of first-person essays. Mail manuscripts to Bylines, Noe Valley Voice, 1021 Sanchez Street, San Francisco, CA 94114. Or send e-mail submissions to bylines@noevoice.com. Please include your name, address, and phone number. Thanks.

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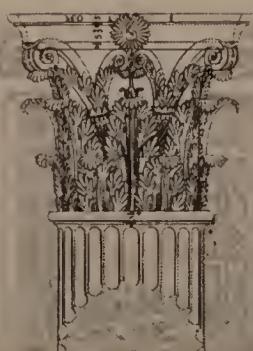
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SHORT TAKES

Bluegrass Music Catching Fire

Toes will be tappin' at the Noe Valley Ministry during the seventh annual San Francisco Bluegrass and Old-Time Festival, running Feb. 2 to 13. The Ministry "has great line-ups for festival fans," says Linda Schneider, a festival committee member.

The Ministry festivities will kick off with "An Evening of Local Legends," featuring the bands Papermill Creek Rounders, Kleptograss, and High Country, on Friday, Feb. 3, at 7 p.m. Ticket prices are \$15 in advance and \$17 at the door. The following evening, celebrated fiddler Kailin Yong and his band, the Boulder Acoustic Society, join bluegrass king Peter Rowan in a Feb. 4 show at 8:15 p.m. Advance tickets are \$22; \$24 at the door.

Then on Saturday, Feb. 11, Drew Emmitt of Leftover Salmon, and the group Donner Mountain perform at 8:15 p.m. That show is \$16 in advance and \$18 at the door. The Ministry is located at 1021 Sanchez Street between Elizabeth and 23rd streets.

The San Francisco Bluegrass Festival, sponsored by the Northern California Bluegrass Society, offers 12 days packed with performances by bluegrass and old-time musicians from near and far. Other concert venues in this neck of the woods include the Make-Out Room, Café du Nord, Amnesia, 12 Galaxies, and the Knockout. But the festival is filled with more than music. Participants can also see the film *Bluegrass Journey*, attend afternoon workshops, and enjoy a children's concert at the Randall Museum. For a complete schedule of performances and tickets, visit www.sfbluegrass.org.

Make Your Mark on the Playground Report Card

What parent doesn't have an opinion about their local playground? Now's your chance to have your voice heard—and help the Recreation and Parks Department decide how to spend its money.

Volunteers are needed to create a city-wide playground report card. The goal of the project, which is being spearheaded by the Neighborhood Parks Council, is to complete a survey at every playground in San Francisco. That's 144 different playgrounds, so there's a lot of work to be done.

If you'd like to help, come to Duboce Park—located at Duboce Avenue and Scott Street just north of the Castro District—between 9 and 11 a.m. on Saturday, Feb. 11, to sign up as a volunteer.

The Neighborhood Parks Council is a non-profit coalition of local parks groups that is working to restore and improve San Francisco parks. To find out more about the organization, visit www.sfnighborhoodparks.org.

Women Who Run With Women

"Women really like to work out with each other," says Lori Shannon of See Jane Run. That's why the sports store is bringing women of all ages together for marathon and triathlon training.

See Jane Run has scheduled two free informational and kickoff meetings: The triathlon training program meeting is on Wednesday, Feb. 1, at 6:30 p.m., and the marathon training program meeting is the next day, Feb. 2, also at 6:30 p.m. The first day of training for both programs starts on Thursday, Feb. 23.

Each training program lasts for three months and ends with an event. "They're all-women trainings that are trainer-led," says Shannon. "The triathlon training is also a fundraiser for the Breast Cancer Fund and has been for years." The marathon training was just added in late 2005.

Get there early—there might be a crowd. "Last year, this really took off," Shannon explains. "There could be up to 75 women in each program. We've had women as young as 18 and up to 65 years old participate."

The meeting and trainings will be held at the store's Noe Valley location, 3910 24th Street near Sanchez Street. For more info, visit www.SeeJaneRunSports.com or call 401-8338.

Panel on Medicare Drug Plan

If you or a loved one is affected by Medicare's new prescription drug plan, come to the Noe Valley Ministry for a free informational panel discussion sponsored by the Noe Valley Democratic Club at 7:30 p.m. on Wednesday, Feb. 15.

The local political group has put together a panel of experts, including David Grant, director of health policy for the Senior Action Network; Traci Dobronravova, director of social services for Self-Help for the Elderly; Dan Bernal, district director for U.S. Rep. Nancy Pelosi of San Francisco; and Simon Chew, a certified insurance counselor and broker for Blue Cross.

The panel will answer questions about the plan, which took effect in January and relies on private insurers, pharmacies, and other health-care companies to provide drug coverage for Medicare's 42 million beneficiaries.

The event will be held at the Noe Valley Ministry, located at 1021 Sanchez Street near 23rd Street. For information, call Democratic Club president Rafael Mandelman at 648-4010.

Kids, Critters, and Cool Cops

Youngsters who love animals (and television's *Animal Cops*) are in for a treat at the free Critters and Kids Valentine's Carnival scheduled from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Sunday, Feb. 12. The event, which is co-sponsored by San Francisco Animal Care and Control and the San Francisco SPCA, is full of games, prizes, raffles, and Valentine's Day treats. Stars from the San Francisco *Animal Cops* TV show will sign autographs and pose for pictures. Plus, the pros will put on a dog safety puppet show and other educational presentations especially for kids.

Animal rescue groups will be on hand with adoptable animals and information. The SPCA is also sponsoring an animal micro-chipping clinic, which is free for San Francisco residents. The event will take place on Alabama Street at 16th Street between the SPCA and ACC offices. For more information, call 522-3500 or visit www.sfsPCA.org.

Lemony Snicket's Play for Grown-ups

The writer sometimes known as Lemony Snicket—a.k.a. Daniel Handler—will showcase some of his new work in a presentation that runs Feb. 24 through March 12. Produced by the Z Space Studio's innovative Word for Word program, *4 Adverbs* is a world premiere play featuring four short stories from Handler's forthcoming novel for adults, *Adverbs*. (The book will be published by HarperCollins in May 2006.) Word for Word is a program in which literary works are acted out on stage in their entirety—word for word.

According to press agent David Hyry, the production is chock-a-block with Noe Valleyans. The play's director, Sheila Baltzer, is a resident of the neighborhood, as is actor Nicholas Pelczar and Word for Word co-founder Susan Harloe. Handler himself lives "a few streets over," says Hyry.

The play takes place at Project Artaud Theater, 450 Florida Street between 17th and Mariposa streets. Tickets are \$28 on

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SHORT TAKES

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 25

Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays, and \$32 on Saturdays and Sundays. Seniors and students pay \$25. A pay-what-you-can rush will be offered on Wednesday and Thursday nights, for seats available 15 minutes before curtain.

All shows are at 8 p.m., except for Sunday shows, which are at 3 p.m. For more ticket information, call 437-6775 or visit www.zspace.org.

How to Make a Mural

Folks who want to create a neighborhood mural—whether they're beginners or experienced artists—are welcome to attend the Community Mural Arts Education Workshops at Precita Eyes Mural Arts and Visitors Center. Participants will get hands-on experience in directing, designing, and planning a community mural. They'll also receive a packet including an outline of the mural process, a sample budget, a materials list, and possible funding sources.

Master muralist Susan Cervantes leads the two-hour workshop on Tuesday, Feb. 21, and Tuesday, March 21, from 7 to 9 p.m. The cost is \$50 per session for non-members and \$40 for members of Precita Eyes. The center is located at 2981 24th Street at Harrison Street. Pre-paid registration is required, so call 285-2287 to sign up or for more information.

Planting Seeds for the Next Harvest Fest

Come celebrate the success of the first-ever Harvest Festival and get a head start on next year's event. A free thank-you party for the 2005 volunteers takes place on Friday, Feb. 24, at 7:30 p.m. It'll be held at the Noe Valley Ministry, located at 1021 Sanchez Street. Music and food will be part of the fun.

Of course, it's never too soon to start planning for the next fest, tentatively scheduled for October. Team leaders are needed for the following areas in 2006: Merchant Liaison, Vendors, Entertainment and Activities, Budget and Fundraising, Promotion, and Volunteers. Folks who are willing to help the team leaders make it happen are needed, too. If you're interested, stop by and meet last year's gang.

If you can't come but want to get involved in the 2006 Harvest Festival, contact Richard May at rambooks@pacbell.net for more information.

Walking Tours Revisit '06 Quake

In honor of the 100th anniversary of the 1906 earthquake, San Francisco City Guides is offering three fascinating new tours: It Can't Happen Here, Phoenix Rising, and Are We There Yet? The tours focus on the experience of the earthquake and its aftermath. They're available all year, with expanded times during April.

It Can't Happen Here will be offered on second Mondays and April 17 at 10 a.m.; and on first, third, and fifth Sundays at 1 p.m. Participants will find out about the massive earthquake, which ripped apart water pipes and toppled chimneys before dawn on April 18, 1906. The tour begins at the park on Ecker Street at Market, between 525 and 555 Market Street.

Phoenix Rising will feature tales of destruction and of city residents' valiant attempts to rebuild. For this tour, meet at Memorial Court, the small park at Fulton and Franklin streets. Phoenix Rising takes place on first and third Wednesdays at 1 p.m.; and on first, third, and fifth Saturdays at 1 p.m.

While walking through the Presidio,

participants will find out about the role of the Army after the 1906 quake. Are We There Yet? takes place on third Fridays and on April 14 at 1 p.m.; and on second, fourth, and fifth Saturdays, as well as April 1 and 15, at 1 p.m. Meet at the Officers Club and Visitors Center at the Presidio.

San Francisco City Guides offers dozens of tours year-round. They're all free, though SFCG suggests a \$5 donation. To learn more and download the schedule, visit www.sfcityguides.org.

Museum of the African Diaspora Comes Together

The newest art and history museum to grace San Francisco's cultural landscape is the Museum of the African Diaspora, also dubbed MoAD. The museum occupies the first three floors of the new St. Regis Hotel at 685 Mission Street near Third Street, and is devoted to exploring the many cultures and experiences of people of African origin.

From now through March 12, MoAD features two contemporary art exhibitions. Internationally acclaimed artists Maria Magdalena Compos-Pons, Mildred Howard, and Marepe created one exhibition specifically for the museum's grand opening on Dec. 3, 2005. It's titled "Dispersed: African Legacy/New World Reality." Photographs, paintings, mixed media, video, and more from two noted collectors are also on view, in "Linkages and Themes in the African Diaspora: Selections from the Collections of Eileen Harris Norton and Peter Norton."

In addition, visitors can see "Made in Africa," an exhibition on loan from the British Museum in London. It features three stone tools made in Africa nearly two million years ago; they are the oldest artifacts in the British Museum's collection.

MoAD is open weekdays and Saturdays, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.; Thursdays, 10 a.m. to 9 p.m.; and Sundays, noon to 5 p.m. The museum is closed Tuesdays. General admission is \$8; seniors and students pay \$5. For more information and to view the museum's online exhibit, visit www.moadsf.org.

Orchid Drawing Classes for Sprouts

The Conservatory of Flowers has an eye-popping series of workshops planned for kids ages 6 to 11 during the month of February. Each Saturday morning, children accompanied by parents can participate in a different orchid-drawing class. The classes take place in the Conservatory's Modern Art of Orchids gallery surrounded by orchids in full bloom. The children will learn basic observation and drawing skills, and all materials are provided.

On Feb. 4, kids will create Chinese New Year orchid cards just in time for the holiday. Orchid scrolls are the project on Feb. 11, unique orchid "creatures" take center stage on Feb. 18, and on Feb. 25 the young artists will investigate the intricate insides of orchids and map their own magical flower worlds.

All workshops are from 11 a.m. until noon. They're free with admission, which costs \$5 for adults; \$3 for youth ages 12 to 17, seniors 65 and older, and students with an ID; and \$1.50 for children 5 to 11. Admission is free for children under 4. Registration is required, so call 666-7001 to sign up or visit www.conservatoryofflowers.org for more information.

This month's Short Takes were written by Erin O'Briant.



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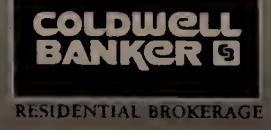
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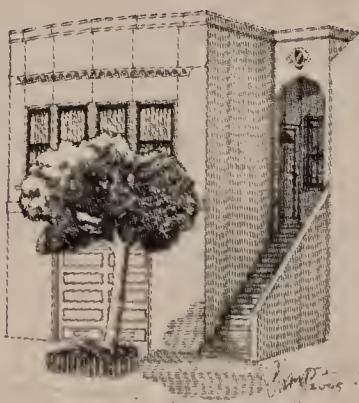


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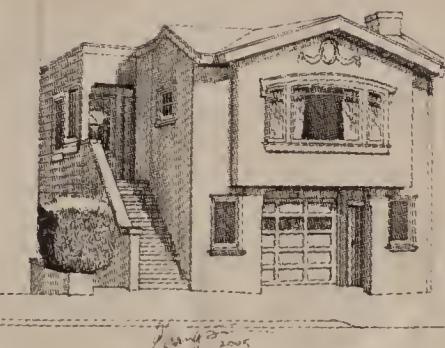


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• FEBRUARY 2006 •

Feb. 1-28: The Noe Valley SENIOR CENTER serves hot lunches for people over 60. 12:30 p.m. Noe Valley Ministry, 1021 Sanchez St. Call 648-1030 to make a reservation.

Feb. 1-28: Chris Sequeira leads classes in TAI CHI. Mon. and Tues., 6 pm, at the Noe Valley Ministry, 1021 Sanchez St.; Wed. and Fri., 10:15 am. Call 415-773-8185 or 650-756-6857 for location.

Feb. 2-25: The DICK 'N' DUBYA Show features humor by Ed Holmes and Amos Glick. Thurs.-Sat., 8 pm. The Marsh, 1062 Valencia St. Call 641-0235.

Feb. 3-13: The seventh annual BLUEGRASS and Old-Time Festival kicks off at the Noe Valley Ministry with performances by the Papermill Creek Rounders, Kleptograss, and High Country. 7:30 pm. 1021 Sanchez St. 454-5238.

Feb. 3-19: LUMA light show, directed by Marlin, plays at the Victoria Theater. Thurs.-Sun., 8 pm; Sat. and Sun., 2 pm matinees. 2961 16th St. 863-7576.

Feb. 3-20: Liz Worthy exhibits ceramics in her solo show "Pieces of CHINA." Reception Feb. 3, 6-9 pm. Ruby's Clay Studio, 552A Noe St. 558-9819.

Feb. 4: See Jane Run offers a RUNNING CLINIC from 8 am to 1 pm at Kezar Stadium in Golden Gate Park. Sign up at 401-8338, or www.seejanerunsports.com.

Feb. 4: A FRENCH MARKET, "Le Marché de la Saint-Valentin," features antiques, crafts, African and Basque items, refreshments, and travel info. 9:30 am-12:30 pm. French-American School, 150 and 151 Oak St. 558-2000.

Feb. 4: Central American women speak out against CAFTA at the Radical Women meeting. Salvadoran supper, 6 pm; discussion, 7:30 pm. New Valencia Hall, 1908 Mission St. 864-1278.

Feb. 4: Bonnie Hayes headlines the Blue Bear MUSIC FOR YOUTH benefit concert and dance party. 7 pm-2 am. The Independent, 628 Divisadero St. 673-3600.

Feb. 4: Peter Rowan performs with Sharon Gilchrist at the BLUEGRASS and Old-Time Festival, along with the Boulder Acoustic Society. 8:15 pm. Noe Valley Music Series at the Noe Valley Ministry, 1021 Sanchez St. 454-5238.

Feb. 4-12: The Young Performers Theater stages SLEEPING BEAUTY with live actors and puppets. Sat. and Sun., 1 and 3:30 pm; matinees Dec. 19-21, 1 and 3:30 pm. Fort Mason, Building C, third floor, room 300. 346-5550.

Feb. 5: Rocket DOG RESCUE showcases adoptable dogs. Noon-4 pm. In front of Zephyr Real Estate, 4040 24th St. 642-4786.

Feb. 5-26: Takeshi Murata debuts a new DIGITAL VIDEO in "Silver Equinox" at Ratio 3 Gallery. Sundays, noon-5 pm and by appointment. 903 Guerrero St. 646-732-3371.

Feb. 6-27: Precita Eyes Mural Arts Center offers a LIFE DRAWING workshop every Monday, from 7 to 9:30 pm. 348 Precita St. 285-2311.

Feb. 7: Preschool STORY TIME, for kids 2 to 5, begins at 10 am. Noe Valley Library, 451 Jersey St. 355-5707.

Feb. 7: Jonathan Bracker reads POEMS from his new collection, *Paris Sketches*. 7 pm. Eureka Valley-Harvey Milk Library, 3555 16th St. 355-5616.

Feb. 7: Social critic TODD GITLIN discusses his book *Intellectuals and the Flag: Reclaiming the American Liberal Tradition*. 7:30 pm. Modern Times Bookstore, 888 Valencia St. 282-9246.

Feb. 7, 14, 21 & 28: The Eureka Valley-Harvey Milk Branch Library offers an AFTERNOON STORY TIME for preschoolers ages 3 to 5. 3:30 pm. 3555 16th St. 355-5616.

Feb. 7, 14, 21 & 28: The Kadampa Buddhist Temple offers weekly MEDITATION CLASSES. Tuesdays, 7-8:30 pm. 3324 17th St. 503-1187.



Chris Hillman (left) and Herb Pedersen perform along with Belle Monroe and her Brewglass Boys at the San Francisco Bluegrass and Old-Time Music Festival on Feb. 10. *Photo by Zarek*

Feb. 9: The 29th annual Senior Adults' VALENTINE DAY DANCE, sponsored by the Recreation and Park Department, features music and dancing. 12:30-3:30 pm. S.F. County Fair Building, 9th Ave. and Lincoln Way in Golden Gate Park. 666-7079.

Feb. 9: St. Luke's Hospital offers an orientation for VOLUNTEERS to assist in the hospital or serve as patient escorts. 3-5 pm. 3555 Cesar Chavez. 641-6538.

Feb. 9: Brenda Knight, author of *Women of the BEAT GENERATION*, discusses the era with Eileen Kaufman, Mary Norbert Korte, Jamie Cassady, and Joanna McClure; Ruth Weiss reads poetry with a jazz accompaniment. 6-7:30 pm. Main Library, 100 Larkin St. 557-4400.

Feb. 9: The S.F. BICYCLE COALITION hosts "Love on Wheels" at the Cafe du Nord. 6-9 pm. 2174 Market St. 431-BIKE.

Feb. 10: Belle Monroe and her Brewglass Boys, and Byrds' founder Chris Hillman and banjo player Herb Pedersen, perform at the BLUEGRASS and Old-Time Festival. 8:15 pm. Noe Valley Music Series at the Noe Valley Ministry, 1021 Sanchez St. 454-5238.

Feb. 11: Learn "Sustainable WEED MANAGEMENT" at a workshop at the Garden for the Environment. 10 am-1 pm. 7th Avenue at Lawton. 731-5627.

Feb. 11: Park lovers are invited to help the Neighborhood Parks Council catalog and rate our city's PLAYGROUNDS. Meet at Duboce Park, Duboce and Scott streets, at 9 am. For information, go to www.sfneighborhoodparks.org.

Feb. 11: A PLANT SALE at the San Francisco Botanical Garden in Golden Gate Park features winter bloomers. 10 am-1 pm. 9th Avenue at Lincoln Way. 661-1316.

Feb. 11: Today is the LAST DAY the Noe Valley Library will be open before seismic renovations begin. Say goodbye at a party from 1:30 to 4:30 pm, featuring music, food, and entertainment for children. 451 Jersey St. 355-5707.

Feb. 11: Bring old photos and memorabilia to the SUNNYSIDE HISTORY FAIR and school REUNION. Noon-3 pm. Sunnyside Elementary School's Mar-

garet Penn Auditorium, 250 Foerster St. Call Jennifer Heggie: 412-5548.

Feb. 11: The 16th annual Chinese New Year TREASURE HUNT, with three difficulty levels, begins with a 3:30 pm check-in. 4:30-9 pm. Meet at Justin Herman Plaza at the foot of Market. 564-9400; www.sftreasurehunts.com.

Feb. 11: The BLUEGRASS and Old-Time Festival features the Drew Emmitt Band and the Donner Mountain Bluegrass Band. 8:15 pm. Noe Valley Ministry, 1021 Sanchez St. 454-5238.

Feb. 11, 12, 14, 17 & 18: The 17th annual Valentine's Day adults-only SEX TOUR at the zoo includes "romantic refreshments" and a mashed-potato bar. Feb. 11 and 12, 10 am and 2 pm; Feb. 14, 17 and 18, noon. 1 Zoo Road. For reservations, 753-7030.

Feb. 12: The Critters & Kids VALENTINE'S CARNIVAL, hosted by Animal Care and Control and the SPCA, features family fun and adoptable pets. 11 am-3 pm. Alabama and 16th. 522-3500.

Feb. 12: S.F. City Treasurer José Cisneros and Miguel Bustos, senior policy aide to Congresswoman Barbara Lee, discuss Latino gay men working in the public sector at the PFLAG Support Group. 2 to 4 pm. St. Francis Lutheran Church, 152 Church St. 921-8850.

Feb. 12 & 26: City Guides hosts a tour, "CASTRO: Tales of the Village," on the second and fourth Sundays of the month. 11 am. Meet at Harvey Milk Plaza, Castro and Market. 557-4266.

Feb. 13: The PROGRESSIVE READING Series, to benefit New Mexico Attorney General Patsy Madrid, features Tobias Wolff, Jonathan Ames, Jennifer Traig, and Stephen Elliott. 7 pm. The Makeout Room, 3225 22nd St. 647-2888.

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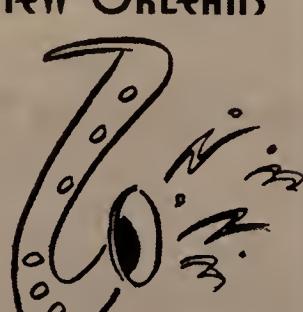
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• CALENDAR •



Feb. 13: The Noe Valley PREPAREDNESS Committee holds its monthly meeting at 6:30 pm. Call 377-3890 for meeting location.

Feb. 14: New College of California School of Law sponsors a workshop on "How to Present a Case in SMALL CLAIMS COURT." 6 pm. 50 Fell St. 241-1300.

Feb. 15: Community Care Licensing offers a CHILDCARE LICENSING orientation, 9 to 11:30 am, followed by a support workshop, 12:30 pm. Children's Council, 445 Church St. 343-3333.

Feb. 15: African-American GLBT writers, including JEWELLE GOMEZ and Frederick Smith, read from their work in a program called "Beautiful Diversities." 6:30 pm. Eureka Valley-Harvey Milk Library, 3555 16th St. 355-5616.

Feb. 15: The Noe Valley Democratic Club hosts a panel discussion on MEDICARE'S new prescription drug plan. 7:30 pm. Noe Valley Ministry, 1021 Sanchez St. 648-4010.

Feb. 16: Lori Feldman hosts a free STOP SMOKING event for people who have made a New Year's resolution to quit. 3 pm. QuitSmart Smoking Cessation, 3884 24th St. Registration required at 285-9770.

Feb. 16: Supervisor Bevan Dufty will report on Noe Valley's grocery stores at a COMMUNITY MEETING co-sponsored by the Friends of Noe Valley, Noe Valleyans for Community and Social Justice, and Upper Noe Neighbors. 7:30 pm. St. Philip Parish Hall, Diamond between 24th and Elizabeth (parking available in lot on 24th). 206-0231.

Feb. 16-March 5: The fifth annual Bay ONE-ACTS FESTIVAL features 12 new works by Bay Area playwrights. Thurs.-Sat., 8 pm; Sun., 2 pm. Eureka Theater, 215 Jackson St. Call 776-7427 for a schedule.



Do giraffes do it? The San Francisco Zoo will answer that question and more at its annual Valentine's Day Sex Tour held Feb. 11-18.

Feb. 18: MANRING KASSIN DARTER performs a 25th anniversary concert of innovative music. 8:15 pm. Noe Valley Music Series at the Noe Valley Ministry, 1021 Sanchez St. 454-5238.

Feb. 19 and 26: Neighbors concerned about the proposed ROOFTOP HELIPAD at San Francisco General Hospital will meet on Feb. 19 at 2 pm, at the Potrero Hill Neighborhood House, 953 DeHaro St., and on Feb. 26 at 4 pm at the Bernal Heights Neighborhood Center, 515 Cortland Ave. www.stophelipad.com.

Feb. 19: Soprano Christine Brandes performs "A Voice in the Valley," selections from Hindemith's *Das Marienleben* and Stravinsky's *Songs on Three Japanese Lyrics*. 4 pm. Noe Valley CHAMBER MUSIC at the Noe Valley Ministry, 1021 Sanchez St. 648-5236.

Feb. 20: POET Eric Park performs "Shakespeare's Blues"; a poetry open mic follows. 7:30 pm. Bird & Beckett, 2788 Diamond St. 586-3733.

Feb. 21 & March 21: Precita Eyes Mural Arts holds WORKSHOPS on how to design and direct a community mural. 7 to 9 pm. 2981 24th St. 285-2287.

Feb. 21: "An Evening with DANIEL HANDLER (a.k.a. Lemony Snicket)" features a performance by Word for Word of *4 Adverbs* from Handler's new novel, and an interview with writer Andrew Sean Greer. 7 pm. *4 Adverbs* will be performed Feb. 24-March 12, Wed.-Sat., 8 pm; Sun., 3 pm. Project Artaud Theater, 450 Florida St. 437-6775.

Feb. 21: Ingleside Police Station holds its regular PDLINE-COMMUNITY meeting starting at 7 pm. Ingleside Station, 1 Sgt. John Young Lane. 404-4000.

Feb. 22: NATURE in the City's Peter Braslow and Ruth Gravani give an overview of San Francisco's natural environment, in a talk hosted by the City Lights Foundation and Counterpulse. 8 pm. 1310 Mission St. 626-2060.

Feb. 23: See Jane Run offers TRIATHLON and marathon training programs. Sign up at 3910 24th St., call 401-8338, or visit www.seejanerunsports.com.

Feb. 23: UPPER NOE Neighbors meets at 7:30 pm at Upper Noe Recreation Center at Day and Sanchez. 285-0473.

Feb. 24: Noe Valley resident JANET THDRNBURG reads from and signs her new collection of short stories, *Rhubarb Pie*. 7 pm. Cover to Cover Booksellers, 1307 Castro St. 282-8080.

Feb. 24: Volunteers for the 2005 Noe Valley Harvest Festival are invited to a THANK-YOU PARTY, with music, refreshments, and a discussion of this year's festival. 7:30-9 pm. Noe Valley Ministry, 1021 Sanchez St. ram-books@pacbell.net.

Feb. 25: Beth Friedricksen holds a WDRKSHOP, "Memory-Keeping at Its Best," to create a personal photo/short-story card, at the monthly meeting of the Older Women's League (DWL). 10 am-noon. Call 989-4422 to make a reservation.

Feb. 25: The Bay Area Photographers Collective (BAPC) invites the public to a free talk by the photographer, writer, and educator Margaretta Mitchell, author of *Ruth Bernhard: Between Art and Life*. 2-4 pm. 50 Scott St. 554-9522.

Feb. 25: The Noe Valley Preparedness Committee offers a free FIRE EXTINGUISHER safety demonstration. Meet at 11 am at Noe Valley Farmers' Market on 24th between Sanchez and Vicksburg. 377-3890.

Feb. 25-March 3: The 24th annual San Francisco Middle School SCIENCE FAIR features projects from 30 public and private schools. Awards ceremony Feb. 25, 10:30 am-noon. Randall Museum, 199 Museum Way. 554-9600.

Feb. 27-April 3: The San Francisco Fire Department offers a free six-session Neighborhood Emergency Response Team Training (NERT). Mondays, 6-9 pm. Dolores Plaza, 1839 15th St. Register at 970-2024 or www.sfgov.org/sffdnert.

Feb. 28: In celebration of BLACK HISTORY MONTH, Marjorie tells "Stories from the Drinking Gourd: Folktales from African-American Heritage," for ages 5 and older. 10:30 am. Eureka Valley-Harvey Milk Library, 3555 16th St. 355-5616.

Feb. 28: The POLICE-COMMUNITY meeting at Mission Police Station begins at 6 p.m. 630 Valencia St. 558-5400.

March 1: A representative from PG&E will discuss power OUTAGES on 24th Street at a meeting of the Noe Valley Merchants and Professionals Association. 9 am. Bank of America, 24th and Castro. 648-3954.

March 2: The 11th annual BARK & WHINE BALL is a fundraiser for the San Francisco SPCA. 7-10:30 pm. S.F. Gift Center Pavilion, 888 Brannan St. 522-3535.

March 4, 11 & 18: Noe Valley NERT (Neighborhood Emergency Response Team) will welcome new members after a TRAINING on three Saturdays in March. 9 am-4 pm. Noe Valley Ministry, 1021 Sanchez St. Call 970-2024 or www.sfgov.org/sffdnert.



In Like a Lion, Out Like a Lamb?

The March 2006 issue of the *Noe Valley Voice* will be distributed on or before March 3, 2006. The deadline for calendar items is **Feb. 15, 2006**. Please note that because of space limitations, Noe Valley events take priority. Our address is *Noe Valley Voice*, 1021 Sanchez Street, San Francisco, CA 94114. Or you may send an e-mail to Calendar Editor Karol Barske at calendar@noevalleyvoice.com.

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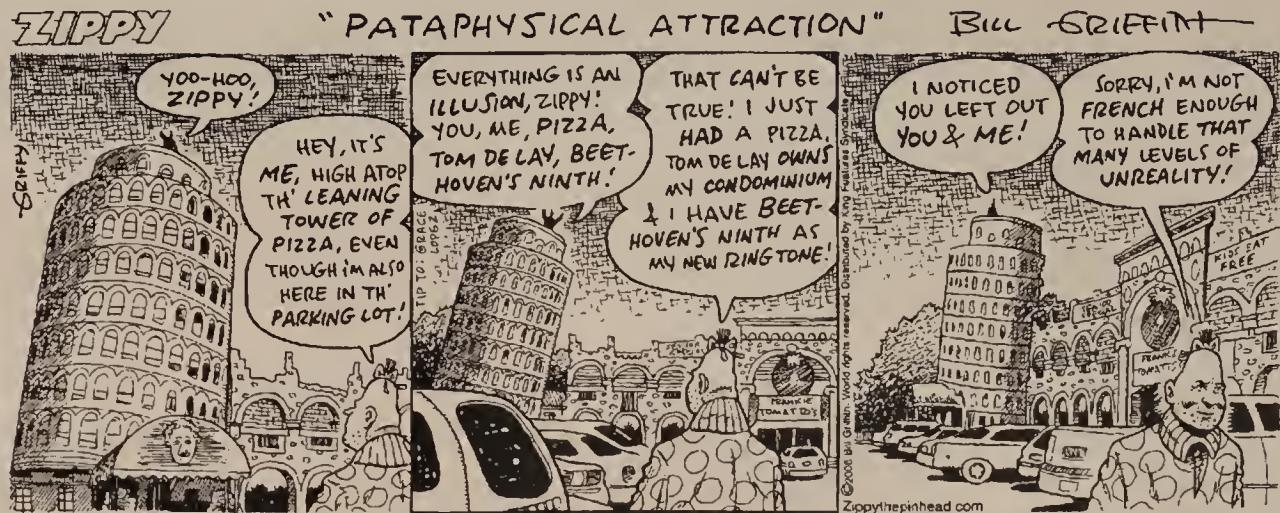


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Happy 2006!



Noe Valley Faces



joe@jaffaOrangePhoto.com

If you live within a five-block radius of St. Paul's Church, you have probably seen **José Garcia** at work. For 14 years, Garcia and his boss, legendary Valley Street handyman/contractor Euclid Sperow, have painted, remodeled, and repaired countless neighborhood homes.

The partnership began in an unlikely way. Drawn here from Los Angeles by San Francisco's renowned beauty in 1991, Garcia filled in for an indisposed roommate who'd been working with Sperow. A couple of days turned into 14 years.

"We get along good," says Garcia when asked about working with Sperow. "We both like to get things done properly, the way they should be."

Each morning, Sperow picks up Garcia at the 24th Street BART Station and brings him back to Sperow's Valley Street outpost, where they prepare for the day's jobs.

Garcia, 34, lives in a Sperow-owned apartment building in Oakland with his wife Maria and their 10-year-old son and 4-year-old daughter. They are expecting their third child soon.

Photo by Najib Joe Hakim



Happy New Year! It's the year 4073 according to the Chinese calendar, and visitors to Alice's Restaurant on Sanchez Street may find a colorful display of oranges on the tables signifying the wish for good luck as in this 2005 photo.

Photo by Pamela Gerard

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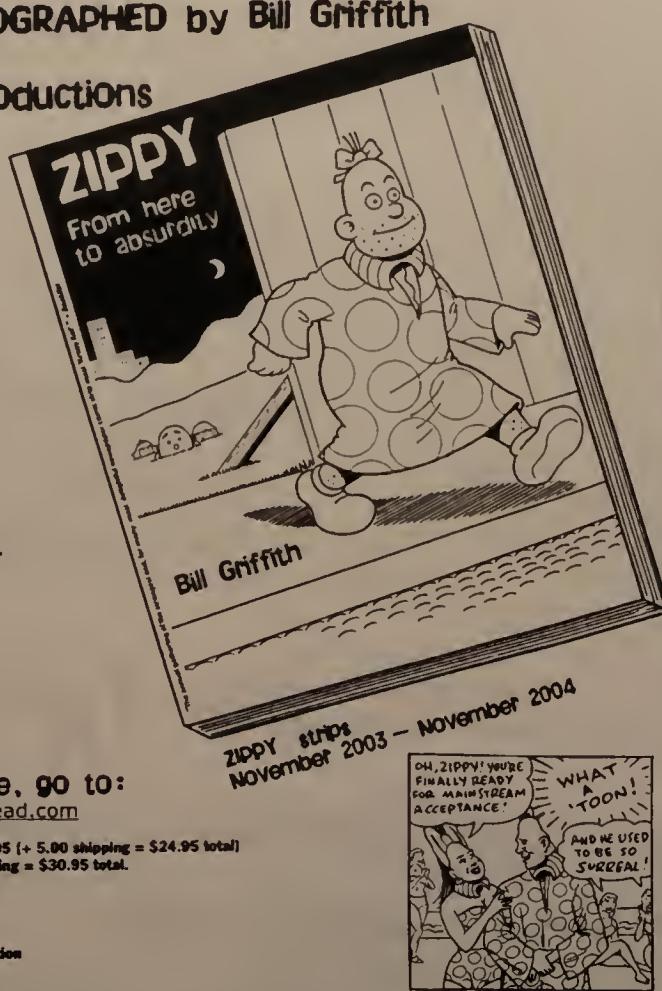
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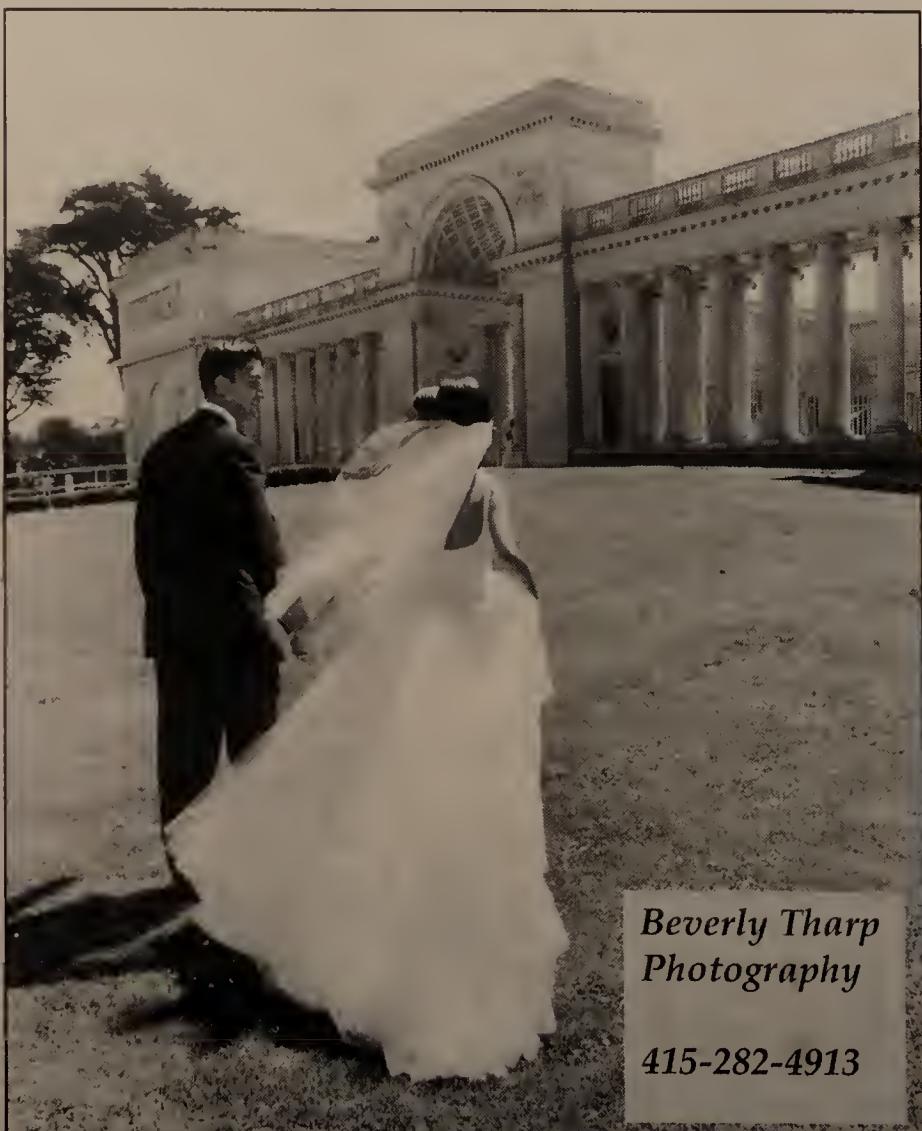
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SCREEN AND SCREEN AGAIN!

Happily Ever—or Never—After

By David O'Grady

When Valentine's Day rolls around, romantic movies like *Casablanca*, *An Affair to Remember*, and *When Harry Met Sally* are often checked out at our neighborhood video stores. But if you're up for something a little different, you might try some movies where Cupid doesn't shoot so straight.

In this month's movie picks, love's combatants spar on a variety of battlefields. Like the prototypical *Adam's Rib*, starring dueling spouses Spencer Tracy and Katharine Hepburn, these films prove that, in the end, love indeed conquers all—but not without a fight.

Up, Sideways, and *Down with Love*

Playboy Catcher Block, the "man about town" reporter for a men's magazine, blows off the wrong woman in the retro-styled comedy *Down with Love* (2003). That woman is Barbara Novak, author of a bestselling book instructing women to abstain from sex until they can enjoy it without love, as men do—or, as Barbara puts it, "à la carte." When Catcher's tomcatting forces him to cancel several interviews with Barbara, her wrath soon becomes the wrath of all women, leaving Catcher with an empty dance card.

Catcher decides to get even by dis-
guising his identity in an attempt to seduce Barbara—not into bed, but into falling in love with him. As Catcher's scheme unfolds over a series of dates, he may not be the only one with a surprise up his sleeve.

In the lead roles in *Down with Love*, Ewan McGregor and Renée Zellweger do a good job of delivering witty wordplay as they inhabit the over-the-top costumes and sets of a mythical 1960s New York. Clearly inspired by the Rock Hudson–Doris Day vehicle *Pillow Talk* (1959), *Down with Love* even exploits the split-screen phone chat, turning it into a clever—and naughty—visual double entendre. Sophisticated and silly, *Down with Love* goes down like fizzy champagne.

It Didn't Happen One Night

A hanging bed sheet kept Claudette Colbert and Clark Gable from jumping into each other's arms—momentarily—in the famous shared-bedroom scene from the screwball classic *It Happened One Night* (1934). In *The Night We Never Met* (1993), the "Wall of Jericho" is a calendar that determines which nights of the week each of three subletters of a New York pied-à-terre can use the apartment.

Brian, the leaseholder and architect of this unusual arrangement, has moved in with his fiancée and can no longer afford the rent on the place, but he wants to keep it as a clubhouse for his overgrown, frat-boy buddies. For Sam, played by Matthew Broderick, the apartment is an occasional sanctuary where he can cook, read, and recover from his busted romance with Pastel, a performance artist (a side-splitting performance by Jeanne Tripplehorn). For Ellen, a dental hygienist played by Annabella Sciorra, the apartment offers an escape from suburban married life and gives her a chance to paint.

Although they haven't met, Sam and Ellen develop an affinity for each other through the art, music, and food they each leave behind in the apartment. When Brian switches nights with Sam, however, no one updates the timeshare calendar tacked to the kitchen wall—leading Ellen to believe that Brian is the object of her affection. A case of mistaken identity soon leads to bigger consequences, as Ellen makes the first move to follow her heart.

A distinctly "New York" kind of movie, *The Night We Never Met* charms viewers with its quirky story and surprise casting, including Garry Shandling as Ellen's lecherous dental patient and Justin Bateman as Brian's tightly wound fiancée. It's a great date movie for anyone who has survived the search for love in the wrong people and places.

All's Fair in Love and Divorce

Sometimes, surviving the search for love isn't the problem—it's surviving the relationship afterward. Such is the story of *The War of the Roses* (1989), a deliciously dark divorce comedy. Danny DeVito plays a divorce lawyer relating the cautionary tale of Oliver and Barbara Rose, whose marriage tracks a tragic but common arc: the couple slowly grow apart as Oliver mortgages his life to his law firm and Barbara dedicates herself to decorating their trophy home.

An emblem of everything Oliver and Barbara sacrificed, their home becomes the literal battleground in their divorce. Refusing to move out or relent, Oliver and Barbara turn increasingly vicious, with Oliver trashing Barbara's gourmet dinner party and Barbara crushing Oliver's collectible car, among many other slapstick casualties. Just how far the war will go has to be seen.

As the two adversaries, Michael Douglas and Kathleen Turner demonstrate they still have the combative spark they mastered in their *Romancing the Stone* movies of the 1980s. Unlike those fun but forgettable films, *The War of the Roses* doggedly bites into its subject and never loses its way. Speaking of doggedly, after this movie, paté will never taste the same.

Cursed Beast Seeks Spell-Breaker

Disney returned to animation glory (and shortly thereafter lost its way again) with *Beauty and the Beast* (1991), the only animated feature to be nominated for a Best Picture Academy Award and one of the first to expertly blend hand-drawn and computer animation.

The story is a timeless classic: An enchantress turns a selfish prince into a

hideous beast, condemning him to a life alone in his castle unless he can find someone to love him and break the spell. When a local inventor, Maurice, wanders onto the neglected castle grounds, he's imprisoned by the Beast for trespassing. But when Maurice's beautiful daughter, Belle, arrives at the castle and asks to trade places with her father, the Beast sees some hope that the spell might be broken.

What gives *Beauty and the Beast* its luster are the wonderful songs, and the inspired animation that accompanies them. The tune "Be Our Guest," featuring a whole pantry of dancing dishes, is worth the rental fee alone. But it's the supporting characters, a hodgepodge of servants whom the enchantress transformed into household objects, that stay with you. Who can forget the teapot Mrs. Potts and her young teacup Chip, the practical clock Cogsworth, or the candlestick lover-boy Lumière, whose amorous embrace of a dishy feather-duster causes her to remark: "I've been burned by you before."

Beauty and the Beast, which is also available in an extended special edition, ranks among the best in animated stories and is a delight children and adults can share over and over again.

Equals in Love—and Revenge

In the 1990s, Polish director Krzysztof Kieslowski created his masterpiece trilogy of films, *Blue*, *White*, and *Red*, based on the colors and themes represented in the French flag. Though *Blue* and *Red* often receive the most play, *White* (1994) is worth a second look for its darkly comic meditation on the meaning of equality between partners in a broken marriage.

Tired of her husband Karol's sexual timidity and dysfunction, Dominique convinces the French courts to grant her a divorce, leaving her ex homeless and penniless on the streets of Paris. Karol returns home to Poland smuggled in a suitcase, and eventually becomes a successful businessman. But he still loves Dominique, and hatches a deceptive plot of love and revenge to convince Dominique to come to Poland.

Kieslowski's film is exquisitely shot—one dazzling scene has Karol and a friend sprawled on the ice of a frozen river after a vodka binge, the winter morning blindingly white—and that alone would make it worth seeing. But *White* also succeeds in capturing the subtle and poignant mysteries of love, found not only in the stormy relationship of Dominique and Karol but even in the happiest and most stable of couples.

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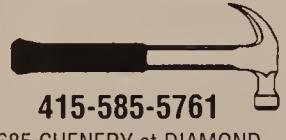
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**FLORENCE'S
FAMILY
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Illustrated Reminiscences
by Florence Holub

**The Schudels of
Noe Valley**

In this essay, first published in the March 1993 Voice, Florence Holub describes her strong ties to the Schudel family, who settled in Noe Valley during the late 19th and early 20th century.

It is always a revelation to drive or stroll around Noe Valley with my sister-in-law, Margaret, because she was born here.

On our frequent neighborhood excursions, she likes to point out various houses and tell of those who lived in them, and it seems as if our valley was once overflowing with members of her family, the Schudels.

Margaret's father, John Schudel, came to America—with his mother and two siblings—after his father died, to join six older siblings already settled in San Francisco. The Schudels were from the small, charming, German-speaking village of Beggingen, near Schaffhausen, in Switzerland.

Back in 1905, Anna, the oldest daughter, was already here and married, with five children, to Oscar Menchen, who operated a paper supply business. Oscar's brother-in-law, Emil, also operated his own business, the Schudel Paper Company, which provided paper goods (wrappings, paper plates, pie boxes, etc.) to many small bakeries, and which he built into a large, lucrative business as the city grew.

Emil Schudel and his wife, Gazina, lived in a house at the corner of Dolores and 27th streets, where they raised four daughters. Behind the house was a barn where Emil kept the horses he needed to pull his delivery supply wagons. Emil's youngest brother, John, also sheltered his horse there.

Not long after the 1906 earthquake, Margaret's mother, Meta, arrived in America. She came over with an aunt, from a small town in northern Germany near Bremen. When she first set foot in San Francisco, Meta, who was just 16, was shocked to see the city in shambles, but she immediately landed a job as a live-in domestic with a wealthy old San Francisco family.

It was Meta's responsibility to keep everything gleaming in her employer's fashionable mansion. At the end of the day, the mistress of the house would walk around brushing a white handkerchief over the furniture, to make sure there was not a speck of dust remaining. There never was, though, because this young lady was (and remained) an unparalleled housekeeper!

Meta was allowed one day off per month, and on that day she visited her sister Gazina on Dolores Street. There she met Emil's brother John, who was also a frequent guest. At their first meeting, Meta and John sat quietly in Gazina's parlor, glancing shyly at one another. But eventually the timidity faded, and the couple developed a mutual romantic interest. On that one precious Sunday a month, they could often be seen venturing out of the parlor and into the streets of the neighborhood.

Their destination invariably was the Nickelodeon—Noe Valley's first movie

theater, on 24th Street near Castro—and following the movie, they'd stroll to a nearby soda fountain for banana splits.

John and Meta married in 1914, and raised a family of three—John, Margaret, and Conrad—in a Victorian house at 820 Elizabeth Street, above Douglass Street. They shared the house with John's widowed mother, whom everyone called "Mutter" (pronounced "Mooter").

John Schudel was a self-employed salesman for the Consumers Yeast Company. In the pre-Wonder Bread era, he was one of the many people who supplied the city with its daily bread, making yeast deliveries to bakers by horse and buggy.

On occasion, John would take daughter Margaret with him and, in a business-like manner, direct her to count out the one-pound packages of yeast, as ordered by the customer. This, recollects Margaret, made her feel very important.

Quite a few of John's customers were relatives who were also running bakeries or stores. Uncle Ernst owned the Majestic Bakery on lower 24th Street. Uncle Jacob ran a small store on Sanchez between 25th and Jersey, which he opened up after he had completed his early-morning milk route (leaving full bottles of milk, and picking up the empty ones to be returned, sterilized, and refilled).

Margaret always liked to go with her father to Uncle Jacob's store because he never failed to present his niece with a large ice cream cone. The outing also served Margaret's mother well, giving her time to do her countless chores without the interruption of little scampering feet.

In the days before the invention of



After John Schudel and Meta Wehrenberg were wed in 1914, they raised their three children in a Victorian at 820 Elizabeth Street.

such labor-saving devices as the washing machine, refrigerator, and vacuum cleaner, "women's work was never done," as they say. And in addition to her three lively children and the household duties, Meta had an aging mother-in-law to care for. Suffice it to say that she would not put up with too much foolishness.

For example, when it was time for Margaret to start kindergarten at the Noe Valley School, located just across the street from their house—where Noe Courts park is now—Meta met with adamant resistance from her shy little girl, who felt she was being totally abandoned. Each morning, she would walk Margaret across the street to her classroom and then return home. But before she could take off her hat and coat, her daughter would burst into the kitchen, wailing loudly.

Meta trotted Margaret back to school, but time after time, the weeping tot



"Tante" Martha and Uncle Albert Jestedt lived on the last unpaved block of 29th Street when they sat for this 1920s portrait with their niece and nephew, Margaret and Conrad Schudel.

would run home, looking for reassurance from a mother whose patience was wearing thin. This might have gone on indefinitely, except for a secret weapon that Meta held in reserve: a thin little switch that rested within arm's reach upon the kitchen molding. When applied, the switch delivered a sharp sting. One quick, light application, and Margaret's rebellion was over.

Another time that the switch was called upon (remember, this was the era of "Spare the rod, spoil the child") was the day Meta sent Margaret and her little brother Conrad to buy vegetables at the market, which was near Nielsen's soda fountain and candy store, at 24th and Douglass. They were allowed to spend one penny each for candy, as a reward. (A penny was like a dime then, a dime like a dollar, and a dollar was a day's pay.)

With vegetables in hand, the two little shoppers entered the creamery to spend their pennies on candy. It was an extremely hot day, however, so the man behind the counter said, "I bet you would like ice cream cones." They nodded their heads up and down agreeably—of course they would. But when he handed them the cones scooped high and said, "Ten cents please," Margaret began to feel uneasy.

The minute they reached home, she directed her little brother to sit on the stairs holding the cones, while she went inside to belatedly ask permission to buy ice cream on such a terribly hot day. She was well into her plea when Conrad entered the room holding a cone in each hand, melted ice cream running down his arms. She knew she was in big trouble when her mother reached for the switch (the one that didn't sting much—just enough to remember forever!)

When Margaret was about 10 years old, the house next door caught fire, and the blaze quickly spread to the Schudel home. This was a terrifying experience, and so much damage was done that the children had to be sent away to stay with a favorite aunt while their home was being repaired.

"Tante" Martha, their childless, doting aunt, and her husband, Albert Jestedt, lived on the then-unpaved upper end of 29th Street (above Diamond), before the Redevelopment Agency razed the old houses and put in new streets. In the 1920s, it was a steep hill where flowers grew and mockingbirds nested in the tall grass, filling the air

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Art Glass • Furniture • Plaster Ornament • Textiles • Wallpaper • Tile

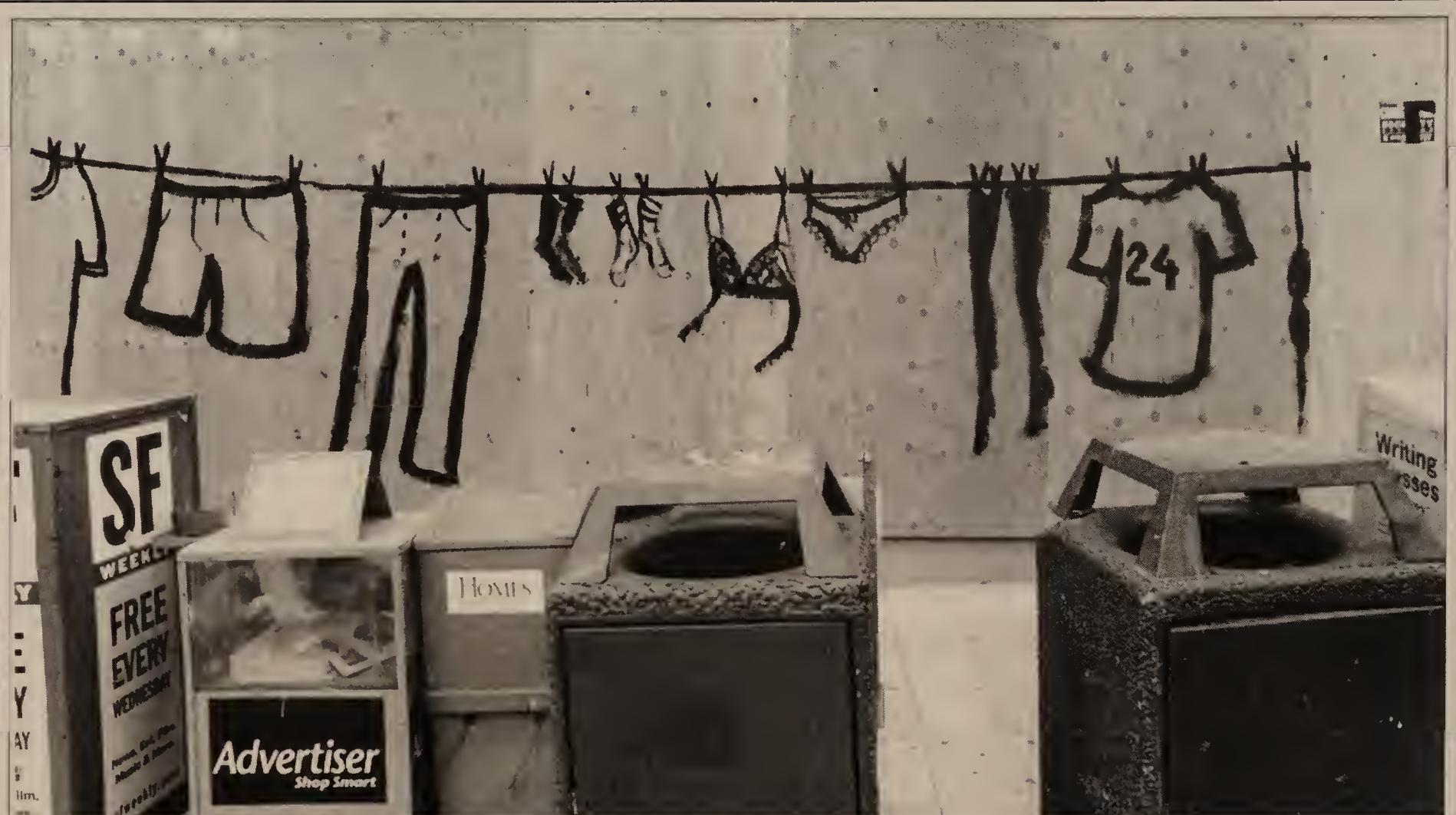
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Hanging on Church Street. This painting temporarily graced the plywood covering the construction (on the Church Street side) of the new Sterling Bank in September. Neighbors without a washer and dryer at home will remember that a laundromat formerly occupied the site.

Photo by Pamela Gerard

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FLORENCE'S FAMILY ALBUM

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 37

with lilting song. The temporary stay was heavenly for the children because Tante Martha provided a daily menu of cakes, candy, and cream puffs oozing with whipped cream. How they reveled in this house of loving care and endless sweets—until both of them broke out in a miserable case of hives!

They had to be put on a healthful, low-sugar diet, but they were cured of their sweet-cravings for a long time. Soon they returned to their remodeled home with its new stucco facade and a garage to shelter the new delivery truck that replaced the horse and buggy. When their father brought home a cake purchased at one of the bakeries on his route, his two young children complained, "What, cake again?!"

Over the years, Tante Martha and Uncle Albert lavished attention upon their little relatives, often taking them to dinner at the Rathskeller in the German-American Hall, or to the park or the beach. One day they even dressed them



Margaret (née Schudel) and Mike Mickelson posed for this 1944 portrait in Florence and Leo Holub's living room.

Photo by Leo Holub

in their Sunday best and carted them to a downtown studio to have their picture taken. There the photographer seated his four subjects in front of a painted backdrop of "Portals of the Past," the colonnade in Golden Gate Park. The children had to hold still for a long time as he snapped several poses. Later they were given brown proofs to choose from, which would turn dark brown, almost black, if not quickly returned to the photographer.

Margaret attended St. John's Lutheran School, an elementary school on Howard Street, and then went on to Commerce High. After graduating with secretarial training, she got a job in the Financial District, where she met my older brother, Mike Mickelson.

They married and were living in the house on Elizabeth Street in the early 1940s, when Mike was drafted into the Army. For the remainder of World War II, he was assigned to a troop transport,

the SS *Sea Star*, which sailed to and from the South Pacific. Mike was at the end of the run when his first son was born and named after his father, John C. Mickelson.

By the time Mike and Margaret's second son, Robert, came along, they had moved to the ground floor of my father's home in Sunnyside—a ravine just west of Glen Park, known at that time, disparagingly, as Pneumonia Gulch. (This was before central heating.)

In 1961, Margaret and Mike Mickelson built their own modern home just across the street from my father's, where Margaret [now 86 years of age] still resides. With my father's death, their son John purchased the family home. He and his wife, Linda, raised four children there—Paul, Beth, Willie, and Joe—all of whom graduated, with honor, from the Noe Valley Nursery School.

The Schudel family is no longer as visible as it once was in Noe Valley. Margaret's father died in 1949 at the age of 60. Her mother lived on for another 21 years, and during those years she and her devoted daughter could be seen shopping up and down 24th Street. In 1971 Meta died, and the house on Elizabeth Street was sold.

Emil, the last of the nine Schudels from Beggingen, died later that same year. By then most of the family had left Noe Valley, except for Emil's youngest daughter, Dorothy, who married a brilliant young lawyer, Jay Pfotenhauer, who was appointed a Superior Court judge. They built their modern home on Cumberland Street in Dolores Heights, and worked actively on neighborhood causes until illness forced them to move to a retirement community.

Dorothy and Margaret bear a striking resemblance to one another, but that is not surprising since their mothers were sisters and their fathers were brothers.

The Schudel offspring were mainly females (13 girls to 5 boys), so the name has almost disappeared with time and marriage. A few years ago, when our oldest son Michael was joining the Navy and we threw a party for him, Margaret was as amazed as we were to see that our son's best friend, George Haddock, was "Geordie," Uncle Jacob's grandson, his daughter Alvina's child.

Today there is only one Schudel listed in the phone book, Conrad Schudel, Margaret's younger brother. Conrad lives south of Noe Valley with his wife, Lois, and their pretty daughter Cheryl.

Cheryl has not yet relinquished her maiden name—and maybe she won't. But in either case, Schudel will long be remembered as a pioneering name in Noe Valley. □



Florence Holub drew this illustrated memory of the Schudel homestead on Elizabeth Street, with "tantes" (aunts) Verena, Frieda, Anna, and Martha standing out front with young Johnny Mickelson.

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Readers Really Get Around

We've got news for you and about you. Here's the latest installment in this travel pictorial featuring some of our most literate, communicative, and adventurous Noe Valleyans. You can join them on this page by writing or e-mailing us. Our address is: The Noe Valley Voice, Attn: Readers, 1021 Sanchez Street, San Francisco, CA 94114. Our e-mail address is editor@noevalueyvoice.com.



Rev. Angel Stork catches up on her reading while recovering from a six-course wedding feast at this 11th-century Italian castle. Stork officiated at the nontraditional ceremony near Rufina in the heart of Tuscany.



Kathy Zucchi likes to travel and has sent the Voice photos from places both warm and exotic. Here she enjoys the awesome scenery in Lucerne, Switzerland.



Noe Valley natives **Jeffrey Blair** and **Alana Lowe Schwartz** trekked through Thailand for three weeks in December. Here they catch up on the news while waiting at the bus station outside of Krabi on the way to Ko Lanta.



Ron Stenger can't enjoy the sights in Praia Do Vau, Algarve, Portugal, until he finishes catching up on the news from home.



Buck Melton turns away from the sun and into some good reading in Lisbon, Portugal.
Photo by Ron Stenger



Gilbertina Guarini took time out from her reading to observe some snake charmers during a recent trip to Jhaipur (the pink city), India. She and her husband **Bruno Guarini** own the store Qoio on 24th Street.



Ah, those warm days. **Gloria Miyashiro**, **Shirley Herndon**, **Keiko Kim**, and **Eileen Granich** read the headlines before going horseback-riding last August.

STORE TREK

Store Trek is a regular *Voice* feature profiling new stores and businesses in Noe Valley. This month we introduce a community-oriented financial institution, an optometrist whose focus is local perspectives, and a vintage clothing store with threads crisscrossing the neighborhood.

STERLING BANK AND TRUST

3800 24th Street at Church Street
415-970-9070

In November, when Sterling Bank and Trust opened its eighth San Francisco branch next door to the exercise studio Fit Lite—in the building that once housed Launderland—the transformation of the northwest corner of 24th and Church streets became complete. Now when people step into the marble entryway of the freshly painted gray-and-green building, they see sleek, custom-designed Herman Miller workstations, a large black safe, and smiling bankers, instead of well-worn washers, dryers, and folding tables.

Steve Adams, the bank's regional manager, says establishing a presence in Noe Valley was a move that made good sense. "We have a lot of customers who live in Noe Valley, and they had been going to our Market Street and Van Ness offices. We saw an opportunity and decided to go for it," Adams says. "I also live on Twin Peaks just above Noe Valley, so I'm in the neighborhood a lot."

Founded 21 years ago, Sterling Bank and Trust is a locally owned institution; its other branches in the city are on Geary, Irving, Alemany, Jackson, and Montgomery streets. The bank offers a full range of financial products, from free personal checking accounts ("We even pay for the checks!" says Adams) to fixed-yield CDs with terms from three months to five years. Adams points out that Sterling's business checking accounts afford a system of cash management that "gives mom-and-pop stores total freedom to pay their employees online, pay their bills online, and manage their business finances online."

The company also offers money market accounts, overdraft accounts, safety-deposit boxes, investment services through Cambridge Research Investments, and a full line of residential and commercial real estate services. The bank's residential real estate department is located in the Noe Valley branch.

Embracing the community even before its doors opened, Sterling Bank joined the Noe Valley Merchants Association and stepped up to sponsor the neighborhood's first-ever Harvest Festival in October. Tom St. Dennis, the bank's president, chairman, and CEO, attended. "I was out there meeting the neighbors. It was exciting," St. Dennis says. "As a bank, you should be involved in the neighborhood. If you're involved, the merchant district thrives, and if the merchant district



Steve Adams, Anita Wilson, and Steven Nice (left to right) invite you to visit the new Sterling Bank branch, in Launderland's old spot at Church and 24th streets.

Photos by Pamela Gerard

thrives, then everybody wins."

The Noe Valley branch has a conference room, which is available to customers and community groups for use free of charge. Hours are Monday through Thursday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Friday, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.; and Saturday from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

—Laura McHale Holland

EYE LEVEL OPTOMETRY

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Dr. Bonnie Ng has been fascinated with eyes since she got her first pair of contact lenses while a teenager attending Lowell High School. "I'd been wearing glasses since elementary school, and I was just so amazed I was able to see so clearly without glasses. That spurred my interest in optometry," says the owner of Eye Level Optometry.

In December, she opened for business at 1544 Church Street at Duncan Street. The storefront was recently vacated by RYS Architects. It was formerly the long-time abode of Homes of Charm Antiques.

After graduating from U.C. Davis and then from Nova Southeastern University College of Optometry in Ft. Lauderdale, Fla., Ng returned to her native Sunset District in San Francisco. She worked several years for other optometrists and ophthalmologists before striking out on her own.

"I was able to take the best thing out of each practice and, hopefully, incorporate it into my own practice," she reflects. "I make sure that each patient is happy and satisfied with the quality of care and the quality of products they receive. One great thing about having your own practice is you set your own schedule. I have more time now to get to know each patient as a person, which I enjoy."

Ng has state-of-the-art diagnostic equipment and offers comprehensive eye examinations, routine and specialty contact lens fitting, emergency office visits, visual field (peripheral vision) testing, punctal plug occlusion (a procedure where plugs are inserted into tear ducts to slow drainage to help patients with dry



Store owner Graciela Ronconi (right) and sales associate Christina Armijo offer a "vintage beauty bar" filled with jewelry, purses, and shoes, in Vendima, located at the corner of 24th and Castro.

eyes), and refractive surgery consultation (for those considering LASIK surgery). She can also prescribe medications to treat infections and other conditions of the eye, as well as monitor for diabetes and high blood pressure—basically, everything except eye surgery, which she refers to an ophthalmologist.

Ng carries an assortment of "very high-quality, stylish" frames, displayed in a light mahogany display case to the left as you enter the office. To the right is a waiting room, which sports comfy chocolate-brown chairs and lighter brown coffee tables that contrast with the beige walls and moss-green carpet.

"I make sure you pick something you'll be happy with," she says. "My ultimate goal is patient satisfaction."

Eye Level Optometry is open Tuesday and Wednesday, 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.; Thursday and Friday, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.; and Saturday from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

—Laura McHale Holland

VENDIMA

4100 24th Street at Castro Street
415-285-7174
www.vendimavintage.com

At the former location of Graystone Wine & Liquor, you can still buy vintage goods—only now they're non-potable. Last November, Graciela Ronconi, owner

of Guys and Dolls, a vintage clothing boutique in the 3700 block of 24th Street, opened her second shop, Vendima. While the first shop stocks "fun day wear" like T-shirts and sundresses, the focus of Vendima, which means "vintage" in Portuguese, is evening wear.

Ronconi is particularly excited about the "vintage beauty bar," a case filled with jewelry, purses, shoes, and hats. "Hopefully, I've created a boutique where customers can mix and match clothing and accessories from different eras and create a style that will be uniquely their own," she says.

About 80 percent of her merchandise is vintage from the 1920s through 1970s, and some familiar labels include Christian Dior, Gucci, Chanel, and Bill Blass. Ronconi buys stock from the public by appointment. She also scopes out estate liquidations and wholesale items.

The shop caters to both men and women. Most cocktail dresses are \$85 to \$200 and women's suits are about \$65 to \$150. Coats are \$75 to \$125. In keeping with Valentine's Day, in February the shop is featuring vintage lingerie and accessories. "The nightgowns are so pretty, some customers actually wear them as dresses!" Men can find tuxedos for \$150, cashmere coats at \$200, cufflinks from \$15 to \$20, and ties running \$15 to \$28.

Shoppers will find the space has been completely renovated, save the original hardwood floor. Ronconi has replaced the dark wood paneling with robin's egg blue walls and freestanding chrome racks and fixtures. She notes, "There was only one lonely fluorescent tube hanging from the ceiling," so she put in new lighting as well.

Ronconi, 38, was raised in Noe Valley. "Even though there have been a lot of changes, I enjoy the neighborhood just as much as I did while growing up here." Most of her family lives in San Francisco, as do she and her husband of 14 years, Robert, with their "bratty Siamese cat."

In addition to running two businesses, Ronconi is pursuing her bachelor's degree in fashion merchandising. "Most of my working life has been in retail. Fashion merchandising is always changing, even vintage. And I find that exciting."

Vendima is open Monday through Friday, 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.; and Saturday and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.

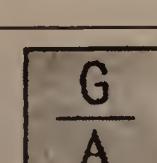
—Olivia Boler

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Very truly yours, Will King

In search of a realtor that we would feel comfortable working with, I found Linda Gordon's personal web-site: <http://www.linda-gordon.com>. I liked Linda's background and the fact that she has been in San Francisco since 1969. I read a couple of impressive testimonials and her *SF Chronicle Readers' Choice Awards* for Best Real Estate Agent definitely caught my eye.

Not having bought property before, Linda always took the time to adequately explain the process and the jargon, giving advice when asked. She explained that she would accompany us to see as many properties as we liked. I asked her why she was in the business and she said "I love to see people find their dream homes and play a part in making that happen."

Linda had a great sense of what we were looking for. One thing that still amazes me is how rapidly she managed all the details of the deal. We met in her office on a Friday and a couple days after calling her we found the property we loved on the first Sunday viewing. Escrow closed in three weeks and we moved in on the following Saturday.

Sincerely,
Jonathan Patrizio & Justin Garrett

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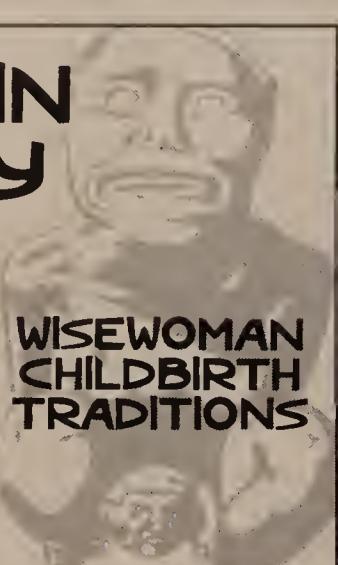
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Graziano's Literary Safari

Local Author Fulfills Dream of Writing a Children's Book

By Olivia Boler

Looking for a nice little Valentine's gift for that budding reader in your life? *Meerkat's Safari*, the debut children's book by Diamond Street resident Claudia Graziano, might be just the thing. The nifty little hardcover, aimed at kids ages 4 through 8, has something for everyone, from beautiful illustrations to guessing-game clues poetically dispensed through rhyming couplets.

Graziano came up with the idea for the book in 1990. She had just graduated from college, was "underemployed," and needed to occupy herself while looking for a job. "I thought writing a children's book would be a fun, creative project," she says.

With the help of Dan Sweeney, her boyfriend at the time, she went to the library—"This was pre-Internet"—to research animals. She and Sweeney wanted to come up with funny rhymes à la Shel Silverstein, the late poet and author of children's books such as *Where the Sidewalk Ends*.

As it goes, Graziano and Sweeney eventually found "real" employment before completing the project, and it was tucked away until 2001, when Graziano found herself underemployed yet again. She started her research once more, this time finding inspiration in a 1996 trip to Nigeria, where she had volunteered at Cercopan, a forest monkey sanctuary. "I suppose that experience fueled my desire to write a book about animals in that part of the world," Graziano says.

Once the story was in place, it was time to find an illustrator. A friend put her in touch with Boston illustrator Michelle Barbera. Both women had been working in technology publishing, and both decided to forge out on their own with their freelance careers. For Graziano, the book was always a labor of love: "I just wanted to see it in print." For Barbera, the project would add to her portfolio. She has since illustrated two other children's books for Sundance Publishing and Grosset & Dunlap. Barbera begins by sketching her drawings, then loading them into Photoshop. The end results are polished, airbrushed drawings. In *Meerkat's Safari*, they're dominated by the soft, warm colors associated with the plains of Africa.

In the book, the animal character Meerkat leads the reader through the African landscape with questions such as, "This gentle beast peeks over treetops with ease. Can you guess who likes to nibble on leaves?", posed beneath the



Claudia Graziano enlists the aid of nephews Dylan Lisle, 5 (left), and Aidan Lisle, 3 (right), and their pal Oliver Moorhead Clarke, 3, in telling the story of her picture book *Meerkat's Safari*.

Photo by Pamela Gerard

footprints of the mystery creature. Turn the page and we find the answer—in this case, giraffes—along with some fun facts: "When giraffes are thirsty, they bend down low. Eighteen-feet-tall giraffes sometimes grow."

A literary agent Graziano briefly engaged told her that rhyming books were not selling with publishers, but she was not deterred. She knew from her own experience as an English teacher of kids in the seventh-to-tenth grades that "rhyming text promotes repeat reading and word recognition for early readers" as well as for those having trouble with reading. One of her tenth-grade students, she discovered, could only read at a second-grade level. Graziano gave the student

picture books to help him along. "He had to start at the beginning," she says.

Eager to see the book come to life, Graziano went ahead and signed on with the self-publishing press Xlibris. She marked the book's December 2005 printing with a small party at Baobob in the Mission. The book is available on the Xlibris web site, as well as on Amazon.com. In the neighborhood, Just for Fun, Small Frys, and Ladybug Ladybug carry copies.

In April, Graziano and Barbera will launch their own independent press, Meerkat's Adventures, and the book, along with two more installments of Meerkat's travels, including an exploration of the ocean, will be printed by Prolong Press.

"Because of the book's early success, we're now approaching it as a business rather than a vanity project," Graziano says. Just for Fun has offered to host an event to celebrate their new venture.

When she's not working on the Meerkat books, Graziano cozies up with her cat Mathilda and hangs out with her tight group of friends. The Peninsula native has lived in Noe Valley since 2002 (she also made the neighborhood her home for a while in 1994), and works as a freelance copywriter and editor.

Probably the biggest question for this new author is, what is a meerkat anyway? (This is actually one of the buttons on Graziano's web site, www.meerkatsadventures.com.) A meerkat is a small burrowing animal found on the African continent from southwestern Angola to South Africa. They usually weigh about two pounds and live in a system of tunnels within a colony of about 30 other meerkats. The name means "lake cat" in Afrikaans, and they like to dine on insects.

Originally, Graziano's safari book did not have a guide, but she decided it needed one, although not a human. "Once I found out that meerkats are incredibly social, intelligent creatures—they actually baby-sit each other's young and teach them survival skills—the meerkat got the job!" Graziano says with a laugh. □

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OK, But What's in the Bag? This may be the Chinese Year of the Dog, and Noe Valley has plenty of furry friends, but they're still outnumbered by kids. Here, an unidentified Boston terrier puts up with the attention of a gathering of 2-year-olds on 24th Street. From left to right, the kids are Steyn Cools (in hat), Galen Lui Heuer, Eleanor Becker (with dog), Priita Peterson, and Eli Morris-Weide.

Photo by Pamela Gerard

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SCHOOL REPORT

Here's the latest scoop on James Lick Middle School and Alvarado and Fairmount elementary schools, provided by school parents and volunteers.

JAMES LICK

Going Once, Going Twice!

Got plans for the evening of Friday, Feb. 10? Spend an evening finding a perfect Valentine's gift, munching on hors d'oeuvres, and dancing your cares away. It's the annual James Lick Middle School Auction and Party, one of the school's biggest fundraisers of the year. You'll enjoy great company, appetizers, and beverages, and the opportunity to bid on a multitude of items and services, including a print by local artist Ruth Asawa, lodgings at the Inn at the Opera, ceramics by Paul Lanier, gift certificates from Gallery of Jewels and other 24th Street merchants, Valentine's Day baskets, San Francisco Giants tickets, ski passes, restaurants, classes, and summer camps for kids.

All funds raised will support scholarships for student travel to Costa Rica and the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, James Lick's dancing and drumming contingent at San Francisco Carnaval, and many more school programs.

The action begins at 6:30 p.m. at SomArts, 934 Brannan Street (near Trader Joe's), and concludes at 11 p.m. Tickets are \$15 in advance, or \$20 at the door. Adults only, please.

Internet Crime Protection

The San Francisco Police Department's highly regarded presentation on Internet Crimes Against Children was featured at the Jan. 4 PTSA meeting. Parents learned some sad and scary statistics from Officer Kim Mercer, who had plenty of real-life stories to share with the group. Paper handouts from the meeting are available in the Parent Room, for those who were unable to attend the presentation.

Young Scientists Show Their Stuff

If you've never visited our annual James Lick Science Fair, drop by the school gym on Monday, Feb. 6, between 5:30 and 7 p.m., and prepare to be impressed. Individual students will demonstrate experiments they have personally designed and constructed, explain their hypotheses, and show you the results. (Many of our bilingual/biliterate students can explain their conclusions in both Spanish and English.)

Prizes will be awarded to students in each grade level, and eight of the best exhibits will be displayed at the Randall Museum. Teacher Molly Lazarus is coordinating the event.

Help with Home Study

On the morning of Friday, Jan. 20, parents of James Lick students enjoyed a delicious breakfast as Principal Carmelo Sgarlato explained the most effective ways to use the new study packets provided by the San Francisco Unified School District. The "extended-learning" packets, which will be sent home every Friday for 10 weeks, are instructional materials that parents can use to support their children's learning at home.

Principal Sgarlato also suggested ways parents can help children prepare for the California Standards Tests this

April. James Lick parent Daisy Hernandez, Latino Coordinator for Parents for Public Schools, discussed the importance of school attendance and the impact of school truancy. December's Chat With the Principal featured a presentation on Gang Awareness.

Costa Rica Fundraiser

Friends and families from James Lick enjoyed a lively Saturday night in January, dancing to Miguel Govea's band *Los Compas* at El Rio on Mission Street. The event will help fund scholarships and other essentials for a student trip to Costa Rica.

Shakespeare Festival Field Trip

There's still room for more parents and students to sign up for the fourth annual Shakespeare Festival field trip in beautiful Ashland, Ore., March 31 to April 2, 2006. Please contact Ray Ponce, 334-4187, for more information.

Looking for a Way to Support James Lick?

Visit "Donors Choose" at the web site www.donorschoose.org. There you will see proposals from James Lick teachers who want to fund specific projects at the school. If a project strikes your fancy, you can make a donation online. So far, the projects include "Rhythm and Motion Across the Caribbean," "Photos for Language Development," and "Linocut Printmaking."

You can now view the latest linocut prints created in art class by James Lick students at a web site arranged by art teacher Alexandra Redfield. Go to www.artsonia.com/jameslick1. You can even order gifts with imprints of the artwork to help raise money to buy more art supplies!

Speaking of which, we need art materials for the after-school activities program. Call the school at 695-5675, leave a message at 436-0349, or drop by the school at 1220 Noe Street at Clipper Street. Thank you for sharing your ideas, talents, enthusiasm, support—and supplies—for our public schools.

—Sue Cattoche

ALVARADO

ADA Construction Begins

Alvarado School will be undergoing construction funded by Proposition A, starting in February and continuing for the next 10 months. This project will update the school facilities to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act and improve the learning environment for our students. We extend a sincere apology to our neighbors as we anticipate increased traffic congestion around the school during this time.

New Morning Drop-off Zone

You may have noticed that we have instituted a drop-off zone to help alleviate the double-parking on Douglass Street and around the school. We are asking parents to continue to pull around the corner of the school onto 22nd Street to drop children off in the mornings. Everyone will benefit from the increased safety!

Not-So-Silent Auction Returns

Mark your calendars for Alvarado's annual Not-So-Silent Auction. This much-anticipated event will be held at Fort Mason on March 18 at 6 p.m. Garnering two-fifths of the PTA's annual budget, the party is truly a wonderful evening and includes a silent auction, live auction, live music, food, and beverages. Tickets go on sale in early March at the school office, so please come join the fun!

We'd like to thank all the local businesses that have already contributed items this year. If you would still like to donate an item to the silent auction, please drop it off at the school office or contact Mara Sieling, the auction chairperson, by calling 648-6158 or e-mailing marasamara@yahoo.com. She is available to pick up items from businesses or homes.

Please note that we will still have our annual rummage sale in mid-April, despite the ongoing construction. Watch for more details next month.

Ready for the Read-a-thon?

Our annual Read-a-thon will begin in mid-February and continue through the end of the month. Each year the PTA gives each student a book, and the kids really get enthusiastic about this enjoyable and educational fundraiser.

—Lisa Barry

FAIRMOUNT

Winter Celebration a Huge Success

Shortly before the December holiday break, Fairmount's Winter Festival was held in the James Lick auditorium. The event moved to Lick this year due to the inability of Fairmount's cafeteria to hold the ever-growing crowd of parents, friends, and family members.

After sharing a sumptuous multicultural potluck in the school's cafeteria, hundreds of members of the school community gathered in the auditorium to watch and hear students in each grade perform. The singing and dancing highlighted the various ways the winter holidays are celebrated throughout the world.

The evening ended with an onstage salsa dance featuring Fairmount principal Karling Aguilera-Fort and faculty member Linda Velazquez.

Parents Bound for Beautification

Fairmount's ongoing school beautification program, which over the last two summers has seen swarms of parents replacing worn-out carpets with new tiled floors in the classrooms and the cafeteria, is gearing up for its next phase. Under the coordination of parent Ricardo Alvarez, parents are looking at

redesigning the existing pod structure of the school and creating additional storage spaces.

The school's landscape also continues to be enhanced through the efforts of parent volunteers and students' gardening activities.

Data Night Looks at Pluses and Minuses

Friday, Feb. 10, will bring parents together to look at data demonstrating the academic growth as well as the challenges facing Fairmount students. Data Night will also empower parents with strategies, tools, and skills to support their kids with easy and doable activities. Fairmount staff and the school site council will continue to plan and work with the principal on improving the academic site plan for enhanced learning next year.

Join Us at the Community Party

This school sure knows how to raise money through a party! Come enjoy great food, excellent company, and fantastic music and dancing at our third annual Community Party on Thursday, Feb. 23, 5:30 to 9 p.m., at El Rio (Mission Street near Precita Avenue).

Quality child care will be provided—call the school at 695-5669 for details—and all funds raised will support our fourth- and fifth-grade camping trip to Westminster Woods.

Stop by for a wonderful time and join our principal, parents, and staff in kicking up their heels.

—Tom Ruiz

SCHOOL CONTACTS

Alvarado Elementary School
625 Douglass Street at Alvarado
415-695-5695
Clementina Durón, Principal
Fairmount Elementary School
65 Chenery Street at Randall
415-695-5669
Karling Aguilera-Fort, Principal
James Lick Middle School
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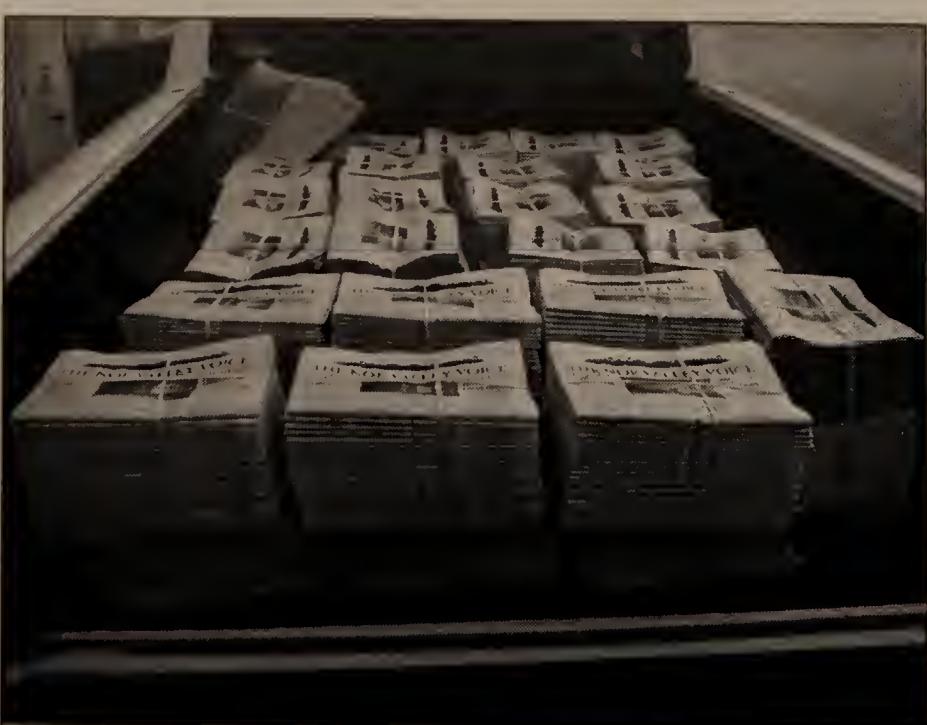
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MORE BOOKS TO READ

It's hard to believe after years of delay, but the Noe Valley-Sally Brunn Library at 451 Jersey Street is finally set to close for renovation on Saturday, Feb. 11. To celebrate the event—and to thank librarians Carol Small, Roberta Greifer, Wayne Donica, and the rest of the staff for all their gifts to Noe Valley book lovers—the neighborhood will hold a farewell party at the branch that same day, from 1:30 to 4:30 p.m. Another era will be ending as well: With this issue of the *Voice*, Noe Valley Branch Manager Carol Small will no longer be selecting and writing about new children's books for this column. Though she will continue to work at other library branches (and at the bookmobile) during the Noe Valley Library's two-year renovation, she has decided to hand over the reins of "More Books to Read" to her colleagues at the Eureka Valley-Harvey Milk Library. We're sad to see Carol go—it's been 16 wonderful years—but we're grateful that Children's Librarian Pam Ow, with the aid of Eureka Branch Manager Karen Sundheim, has agreed to keep us supplied with children's book selections (see below). To check out a book's availability, call the Noe Valley (355-5707) or Eureka Branch (355-5616), or visit the San Francisco Public Library web site: www.sfpl.org. You can also flag down the bookmobile, which will make regular visits to Noe Valley after the Feb. 11 closing. Look for it on Elizabeth Street near Diamond, in front of St. Philip's School, on Mondays and Wednesdays, 10:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. For more information call 557-4353. —Ed.

NEW SELECTIONS

Children's Fiction

❖ Baby Oscar, sister Millie, and their parents go out for a city park picnic to celebrate *Oscar's Half Birthday*, by Bob Graham. Ages 3 to 6.

❖ A boy describes his lyrical nighttime stroll in *I Took the Moon for a Walk*, written by Carolyn Curtis and illustrated by Alison Jay. Ages 4 to 7.

❖ Digby, a dog, and Kate, a cat, share a friendship where compromise smooths out little disagreements, in *Digby and Kate 1, 2, 3*, by Barbara Baker, illustrated by Marsha Winhorn. Ages 5 to 7.

❖ In 1934, 12-year-old Kai endures a long sea voyage and anxious weeks of waiting at the immigration station in *Kai's Journey to Gold Mountain: An Angel Island Story*, by Katrina Saltonstall Currier, illustrated by Gabhor Utomo. Ages 8 to 10.

❖ *Lizzie Bright and the Buckminster Boy*, by Gary D. Schmidt, tells the story of a lonely preacher's son, Turner Buckminster, who settles with his family in a rural Maine town rife with bigotry, and befriends Lizzie, a young girl living nearby in a shanty town of former slaves. Ages 11 and up.

Children's Nonfiction

❖ *Ice Skating School* by Naia Bray-Moffatt follows a class of young skaters from their first steps on the ice to a performance, with color photographs by David Handley. Ages 5 to 8.

Children's book annotations written by librarians
Pam Ow and Karen Sundheim of the Eureka Valley-Harvey Milk Memorial Branch Library

The Noe Valley-Sally Brunn Branch Library, 451 Jersey Street, will remain open until closing for renovation on Feb. 11. Hours are Tues. 10-9, Wed. 1-9, Thurs. 10-6, Fri. 1-6, and Sat. 10-6. Phone: 415-355-5707. The Eureka Valley-Harvey Milk Memorial Branch Library is located at 3555 16th Street (near Market). Hours are Mon. 12-6, Tues. 10-9, Wed. 12-9, Thurs. 10-6, Fri. 1-6, and Sat. 1-6. Phone: 415-355-5616.



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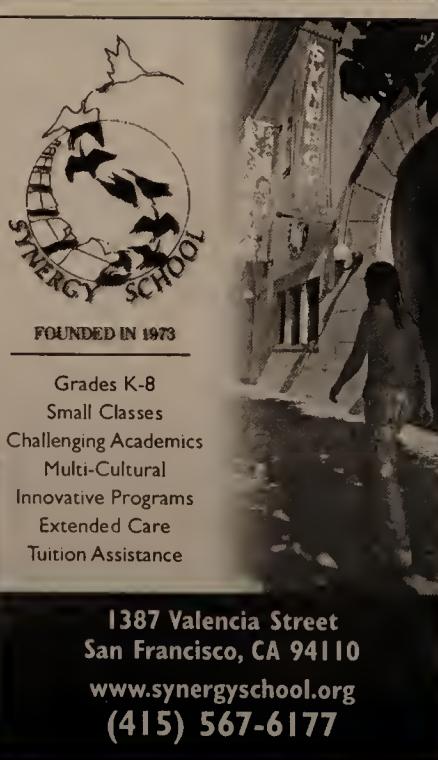
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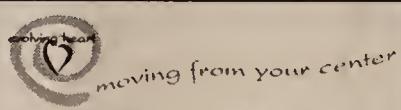
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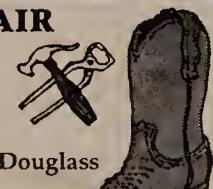
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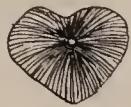
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Words Wanted: The Noe Valley Voice welcomes submissions of stories, poems, and essays. Write lastpage@noevalleyvoice.com or send manuscript, plus name, phone, and e-mail to Noe Valley Voice, 1021 Sanchez St., San Francisco, CA 94114. Include SASE if you need materials returned.

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Then mail your ad copy and check, made out to the *Noe Valley Voice*, so that we receive it by the **15th of the month** before the month in which you'd like to advertise. The address is *Noe Valley Voice Class Ads*, 1021 Sanchez Street, San Francisco, CA 94114. (Sorry, the *Voice* is unable to accept Class Ads by phone or e-mail at this time.)

10 for 10 discount: The *Noe Valley Voice* publishes a news edition 10 months a year. (We're on vacation in January and August.) If you place the *same* class ad in 10 issues, you are entitled to a 10 percent discount. To figure your cost, deduct 10 percent from the total amount due for 10 issues.

The next *Voice* will be the March 2006 issue, distributed in Noe Valley on or before March 3. **The deadline for Class Ads is Feb. 15, 2006.** The Class Ads are printed in the newspaper edition and then displayed for one month on our web site: www.noevalleyvoice.com.

Class advertisers should keep in mind that only the first few words of the ad (not to exceed one line of type) will be set in bold. Also, receipts and tear sheets will be provided only if your order is accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Thank you for your support.

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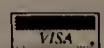
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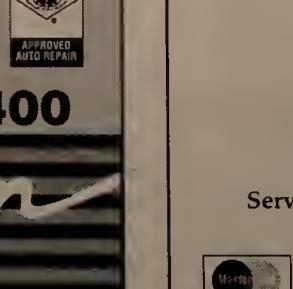
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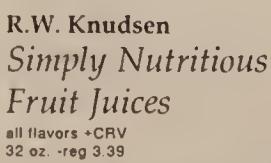
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AMERICANS
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and now for the RUMORS behind the news

Recent Power Outages

By Mazook

A WALK IN THE DARK: The electricity went out in Noe Valley midday on Nov. 29. The neighborhood's clocks stopped and refrigeration ceased, though many of us didn't learn about it until we arrived home from work that evening and saw the blinking 12:00 on the radio. Of course, the cash registers stopped at the restaurants and shops on 24th Street, and unsaved computer tasks vanished on many a telecommuter's screen.

That wasn't so bad. But then the power went out midday on Dec. 16, and again on the 18th, and then again on the 30th and 31st of December. Noe Valleons started to worry as streets went dark and all the clocks and gadgets had to be reset one more time. Frozen food had to be tossed, which was an ugly sight at Bell Market, where the freezers had to be emptied. A couple of the blackouts lasted one to two hours and were on prime shopping days. What was going on?

That's what Carol Yenne, president of the Noe Valley Merchants and Professionals Association, wanted to know, on behalf of the many frustrated businesses on 24th Street. She sent PG&E an e-mail, demanding an explanation. Meanwhile, PG&E announced it was scheduling a planned outage from 8:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Jan. 13. The outage was postponed after Yenne told them those hours were totally unacceptable.

Then on Jan. 23, a Monday afternoon, all the lights went out again. That was the last straw. As soon as neighborhood computers were back online, Yenne was sending an SOS via e-mail to Supervisor Benvan Dufty.

"The blackouts are so infuriating, and this is driving us crazy," she wrote. "This is costing all 200 businesses money every single time it happens. It is making Noe Valley look like a third world country to our customers."

Dufty contacted the S.F. Public Utilities Commission and joined Yenne in hounding PG&E. PG&E's Jimi Harris assured them that certain planned outages were for "preventative maintenance" and that a PG&E representative would attend the next Merchants Association meeting "and make a formal presentation on how [PG&E is] improving service reliability in 2006."

That was Monday. Tuesday afternoon at about a quarter to three, boom. The power was out yet again.

By that time, the Noe Valley Bureau of Investigation, fearing our neighborhood was under domestic or foreign attack, decided to call Dufty and PG&E directly.

PG&E spokesman Paul Morano called back within an hour. He said he was aware of complaints that were coming from Noe Valley about recent power outages, and explained that the Tuesday outage in the neighborhood was caused by "a car crashing into a pole on Cesar Chavez, which affected about 5,900 customers." As for the outage the day before, he explained that "there was a cable failure at Potrero that had power down for about an hour."

Morano also said notices had been sent out about a new planned outage on Jan. 26 from 1 to 6 a.m. As for earlier blackouts, he said PG&E had a regulator problem at a substation on Nov. 29, "which caused loss of power to Noe Valley, and the Dec. 16 outage was planned to correct the regulator problem." Service restoration to one area in the neighborhood had caused power outages in other parts of the neighborhood, he said. The other three outages in December, were "related to the storms and high winds."

On the morning of Wednesday, Jan. 25, Yenne e-mailed all the member merchants about the impending early-morning blackout, saying it would be limited to the eastern end of the 4000 block of 24th Street. PG&E also sent people out to the affected area to give residents and stores a heads-up.

Yenne says PG&E will face the music at the Merchants Association meeting on Wednesday, March 1, at 9 a.m., on the second floor of the BofA building at 24th and Castro. Dufty promises, "PG&E management representatives will be in attendance, and make themselves available to answer specific questions in thorough detail."

• • •

A TALE OF TWO POLES: Thanks to Sanchez Street Hill resident Mark Miller, who wrote a letter to the editor (see page 10) setting Rumors straight about who on the hill is having their wires undergrounded. In fact, there will be no undergrounding of wires for most of the 800 "block" (actually two blocks) of Sanchez Street, not just the so-called "lost block" (850-899) between 22nd and Hill streets. It's nearby Hill Street that is being wired subterraneously.

In a follow-up to his letter, Miller explained that there will be a partial undergrounding on the top block of Sanchez (800 to 849). The wires at the northeast corner of Hill and Sanchez will run underground from Hill to the first utility pole on Sanchez, which is toward the middle of the 800-849 block. Then the wires will go up the pole and head north aboveground to a second pole. At the second pole, the wires go underground again and then north to connect to 21st Street, which has had its wires underground for several years.

Those two poles should stand as monuments to bad urban planning and wasted resources. They probably hold up the next set of wires that'll be blown down in the next big storm, causing yet another blackout.

• • •

THE LOST BLOCK OF SANCHEZ may have gained some notoriety in Sony television ads in Europe, however. This past summer, Sony filmed a number of local ads, one on Upper Sanchez that featured the release of gazillions of small multicolored rubber balls, which bounced down the Sanchez Street hill toward 24th Street.

The advertising campaign was produced by a Danish ad firm, and promoted Sony's

Bravia LCD TV screens. They wanted to get across the message that "the colour you'll see on these screens will be 'like no other.'" Sending 250,000 superballs down the streets of San Francisco may be a strange way to do this, but that was Danish director Nicolai Fuglsig's creative vision. In any case, the color in the photos on Bravia ad's web site is pretty fantastic.

The ads, which are accompanied by *Heartbeat*, some great music performed by Jose Gonzalez, are featured at www.bravio-advert.com. Click on photos and follow the bouncing balls. Keep clicking on various pictures and slideshows to get to the Sanchez Street shots.

• • •

SCRUBBING BUBBLES: Clean streets and sidewalks have been a top priority on the agenda of every neighborhood group in Noe Valley since 1904, when the East & West of Castro Street Improvement Club was first organized.

However, thanks to the efforts of the Merchants and Friends of Noe Valley, the first fruits of Downtown Noe Valley's Community Benefit District became a reality on Jan. 23, when workers appeared and started cleaning the streets seven days a week.

"We are clean and green," proclaimed a very excited Debra Niemann, Friends of Noe Valley past president and current CBD chair. "They are steaming the sidewalks now, it's just great."

Merchants President Yenne says she also is very pleased that the daily cleaning has started, and she looks forward to striding down the swept sidewalks of 24th Street.

• • •

TELL 'EM, TODDLERS: Also being spruced up is Noe Courts Park at 24th and Douglass. At the request of park neighbors, the city has been tinkering with improvements to the children's play area, such as new fencing to keep toddlers from tumbling out of the sandbox. Lizzy Hirsch from Rec and Park presented two design options at a

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

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OIL CHANGE

RUMORS

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

neighborhood meeting in January. If you'd like to look at the designs, call Hirsch at 581-2551 or e-mail lizzy.hirsch@sfgov.org.



FOOD FOR THOUGHT: Noe Valleyans for Community and Social Justice, together with the Noe Valley Ministry, hosted a potluck dinner Friday night, Jan. 27, at 1021 Sanchez Street. The special guests were homeless people from 24th Street.

According to Ministry sponsor Ramon Sender, the two groups had been planning this event for several months. Members went out to 24th Street and personally invited all those they thought were homeless or in need. The menu included chicken and lasagna. NVCSJ leader Peter Gabel reports they had a good turnout, with 16 attending the dinner and all enjoying the good food.



GOOD TASTE: Pasta Pomodoro owner Adriano Paganini, who opened his first restaurant on Chestnut Street in 1994 and opened his Noe Valley branch in '97 (it was the fourth to open in the city), has recently decided to live here as well. He's bought a house on Liberty Street near Church.

"I was living in Twin Peaks, but found a great home down here in the valley. I just love the weather here and how close I am to not only 24th Street but also to the very lively Mission District," Paganini says.

Paganini, who was born in the Italian village of Solbiate Olona near Milan, now operates 27 Pasta Pomodoros in the Bay Area, of which seven are in San Francisco. There are three in Sacramento, and 11 more have opened in the last three years in Southern California. "We now have over 1,700 employees," says the enthusiastic restaurateur.

"Noe Valley has been very special to me since I met my wife five years ago right in

front of our Noe Valley restaurant," smiles Paganini.

Asked why Pasta Pomodoro is so successful, he says the answer is simple: "Value: good food, reasonably priced."

In other food news, Carolyn Miller and Sharon Smith feature recipes from three Noe Valley restaurants in their new and updated *Savoring San Francisco*. The book showcases 100 recipes from 100 of San Francisco's best restaurants.

Representing Noe Valley are the Grilled Fuyu Persimmon and Red Oak Leaf Lettuce Salad with Candied Pears from Firefly on 24th Street, the Saffron Pappardelle with Lamb Sauce from Bacco Ristorante on Diamond, and Shaved Squash and Ricotta Bruschetta from Incanto Restaurant on Church Street. I'll have one of each.

Sorry to see Miss Millie's close its doors in January. The restaurant, on 24th above Castro, was a great source of comfort food over the past 10 years. (Search for Miss Millie's on the *Voice* web site, and you'll find an amazing pecan pie recipe.)

As you foodies know, owner Gary Rizzo has decided to relocate the eatery to Rockridge in Oakland (5912 College Ave.). Rizzo told the *Voice* that there wasn't enough trade in Noe Valley during the week to support the restaurant. He also said the business climate in Oakland was more friendly than San Francisco. In December, a transfer-of-ownership notice was posted on the window, but whoever has bought the restaurant is staying mum.

THIS JUST IN: On Jan. 31, the Board of Supes approved changes to the planning code that will allow three new restaurants or bars to move onto 24th Street. With the vacancy at Miss Millie's, that makes four potential eating or drinking establishments.



THE WRITE STUFF: Noe Valley author, historian, and archivist Bill Yenne has just released his latest book, called *Indian Wars: The Campaign for the American West*.

It made the Amazon Top 100 in December. Our prolific author of nearly 80 books, according to a review in the *Wall Street*

Journal, "does not follow a revisionist script when writing with a cinematic vividness."

Indian Wars sold out quickly in its first printing, and Yenne says that a third edition is not far away.

Local bookseller Cover to Cover reports that the best-selling book through the holiday season was *The Year of Magical Thinking* by Joan Didion. The top children's book was *The Lightning Thief* by Rick Riordan.



SHORT SHIRTS: A skin-care spa called Dermalounge has moved into the large corner storefront at Church and 25th streets formerly occupied by Nourish. It offers "photorejuvenation facials," botox, and high-tech skin treatments. Dermalounge had a grand opening party with antioxidant refreshments on Jan. 25. "We're extremely excited to be in the Noe Valley neighborhood," says Nellie Wong, speaking for owner and CEO Nicole Alvino.

A group of businesses has started sharing the space on the corner of Church and Clipper where Trends used to be. First to arrive was Wisewoman Childbirth Traditions, offering doula and midwife services. Then last month, two chiropractic doctors calling themselves More Mojo—Darcie Kendrick and Kristine Hicks—moved in. A massage therapist will be joining them soon.

Vivon Chan, who had to move from her small shop on Castro above 24th, was going to reopen in Hayes Valley. Her plans abruptly changed when La Coterie, across from Bell Market, moved its services to a home business, allowing Vivon to move in there before Christmas. "I feel very lucky that I got this spot," says Vivon. Her boutique, called Vivon, sells women's clothes and accessories.

It looks like an optometrist will be opening a shop on 24th Street in the space vacated by Rose Nails, next to Martha's Coffee.

The remodel at Real Foods must be going very slow, since workers were only seen mopping up the flood of water that came through the leaky roof during the December storms.

Frisco Star, equine stablemate of Lost in

the Fog, ran his first race of the new season at Bay Meadows on Jan. 26. He came in first in the six-furlong sprint, but not in record-breaking time. Noe Valley icon Harry Aleo owns the 3-year-old horse, and hopes he will follow in the Fog's hoof-steps.

Earlier that week, Aleo and trainer Greg Gilchrist accepted the Eclipse Award for Lost in the Fog, who was voted America's Outstanding Sprinter of 2005.



SAY GOODBYE to Noe Valley artist Mark Adams, who died last month at age 75. Adams' tapestry, stained glass, oil painting, mosaics, printmaking, and watercolors made him world-famous.

You can find his tapestries at the de Young and his stained glass at Grace Cathedral and Temple Emanu-El.

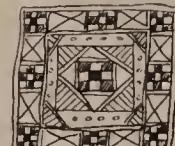
Adams was a very humble man who resided in an old firehouse on 22nd Street near Noe. His wife, artist Beth Van Hoesen, survives him.

Noe Valley has also lost a longtime activist, John Brunn, who with his wife, Sally Brunn, was an ardent supporter of neighborhood causes, especially the preservation of the Noe Valley Library. After Sally died more than a dozen years ago, John remained a thoughtful and generous neighbor on Hoffman Avenue.

Elizabeth Street resident Eunice Rosenberg remembers John fondly. "John was a retired math teacher, and very modest. He loved his neighborhood, and cared what happened here," she said.



THAT'S 30, FOLKS. See you next month.



Danish filmmaker Nicolai Fuglsig took some terrific shots during his filming of an ad for Sony's new Bravia LCD TV on Sanchez Street last summer. Those round things are tiny superballs, in a variety of bright colors. You can see and order photos at www.bravia-advert.com.



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Castro Area Planning + Action
 Contact: Linton Stables, 541-0344, ext. 230
 E-mail: capa@home4us.org
 Meetings: Second Thursday of the month, Eureka Valley Recreation Center, 100 Collingwood St., 7:30 p.m.

Diamond Heights Community Association
 Contact: Betsy Eddy, 239-5776
 Mailing Address: P.O. Box 31529, San Francisco, CA 94131
 Meetings: First Thursday of the month, 7:30 p.m. Call for location.

Dolores Heights Improvement Club
 Contact: Amy Powell, 647-4228
 Mailing Address: 3732 21st St., San Francisco, CA 94114
 Meetings: Board meetings bimonthly; membership semi-annually. Call for details.

Duncan Newburg Association (DNA)
 Contact: Keith Eickman, 282-8988; Evelyn Martin, 826-6734; Deanna Mooney, 821-4045
 Mailing Address: 560 Duncan St., San Francisco, CA 94131
 Meetings: Call for details.

East & West of Castro Street Improvement Club
 Contact: Paul Kantus, 647-3753
 Mailing Address: 492 Douglass St., San Francisco, CA 94114
 Meetings: First Wednesday of the month (every other month—call to confirm), Noe Valley Library, 451 Jersey St., 7:30 p.m.

Eureka Valley Promotion Association
 Contact: Lion Barnett, 255-3624
 Mailing Address: P.O. Box 14137, San Francisco, CA 94114
 Meetings: Third Thursday of the month (except December), Eureka Valley Recreation Center, 100 Collingwood St., 7:30 p.m.

Fair Oaks Neighbors
 Contact: Joyce Kurtz, 401-6362
 Mailing Address: 261 Fair Oaks St., San Francisco, CA 94110
 Meetings: Call for information. The annual Fair Oaks Street Fair is always held the day before Mother's Day.

MORE GROUPS TO JOIN

Friends of Glen Canyon Park
 Contact: Richard Craib, 648-0862
 Mailing Address: 140 Turquoise Way, San Francisco, CA 94131
 Meetings: Call for details.

Friends of Noe Courts Playground
 Contact: Laura Norman
 E-mail: lauranor@yahoo.com
 Mailing Address: c/o Friends of Noe Valley, P.O. Box 460953, San Francisco, CA 94146
 Meetings: E-mail for dates and times.

Friends of Noe Valley
 Contact: Richard May, 206-0231
 E-mail: rambooks@pacbell.net
 Web site: www.friendsofnoealley.com
 Mailing Address: P.O. Box 460953, San Francisco, CA 94146
 Meetings: First or second Thursday of the month (call or e-mail to confirm), Noe Valley Library, 451 Jersey St., 7 p.m.

Friends of On Lok's 30th Street Senior Center
 Contact: Marianne Hampton, 601-7845
 Mailing Address: 205 30th St., San Francisco, CA 94131
 Meetings: Occasional. Call for details.

Friends of Upper Noe Recreation Center
 Contact: Christina Goebel, 826-7772
 E-mail: christina_goebel@yahoo.com
 Meetings: Call or e-mail for dates and times.

Liberty Hill Neighborhood Association
 Contact: John Barbey, 695-0990
 Mailing Address: P.O. Box 192114, San Francisco, CA 94119
 Meetings: Quarterly. Call for details.

Noe Strolls "Playgroup on Wheels"
 Contact: Martine, noestrolls@aol.com.
 Monthly Stroll: First Tuesday of the month, 1 p.m. To receive stroll locations and notices of other events, e-mail your first name, and your baby's first name and age, to noestrolls@aol.com or go to www.noestrolls.com.

Noe Valley Democratic Club
 Contact: Rafael Mandelman, 648-4010
 Meetings: First Wednesday of the month; Noe Valley Ministry, 1021 Sanchez St., 7:30 p.m.

Noe Valley Farmers' Market
 Co-sponsor: Noe Valley Ministry
 Contact: Paula Benton, 248-1332
 Mailing Address: 4104 24th St., #401, San Francisco, CA 94114
 Meetings: Second Thursday of the month, Noe Valley Ministry, 1021 Sanchez St., 6 p.m.

Noe Valley Library Campaign
 Contacts: Kim Drew, 643-4695, kkdrew@yahoo.com; Marian Chatfield-Taylor, 626-7512, ext. 103
 Mailing Address: Friends of the

San Francisco Public Library, 391 Grove St., San Francisco, CA 94102
 Meetings: Second Wednesday of the month, Noe Valley Library, 451 Jersey St., 6:30 p.m.

Noe Valley Merchants and Professionals Association
 Contact: Carol Yenne, 648-3954
 Mailing Address: c/o Small Frys, 4066 24th St., San Francisco, CA 94114
 Meetings: Last Wednesday of the month, Bank of America, 24th and Castro, 9 a.m.

Noe Valley Parent Network
 Contact: Mina Kenvin
 E-mail: minaken@gmail.com (this is an e-mail resource network for parents)

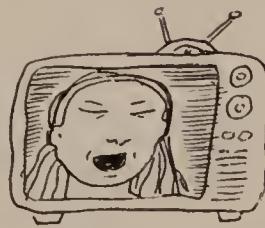
Outer Noe Valley Merchants
 Contact: Jim Appenrot, 641-1500
 Mailing Address: 294 29th St., San Francisco, CA 94131
 Meetings: Call for details.

San Jose/Guerrero Coalition to Save Our Streets
 Contacts: Don Oshiro, 285-8188
 E-mail: contact@sanjoseguerrero.com
 Web site: www.sanjoseguerrero.com
 Meetings: See web site.

See Jane Run Running/Walking Club
 Contact: Lori Shannon, 401-8338
 Mailing Address: 3870 24th Street, San Francisco, CA 94114
 Meetings: Sundays, 10 a.m. (Runners meet at See Jane Run to pick up the 5K run/walk route. Info? www.SeeJaneRunSports.com.)

Southwest Mission Neighborhood Association (SWMNA)
 Boundaries: 24th Street to Cesar Chavez and Fair Oaks to Mission
 Contact: Lori Oshiro, Secretary
 E-mail: lori@tail-wagging.com
 Web site: www.tail-wagging.com
 Meetings: E-mail for information.

Upper Noe Neighbors
 Contact: Vicki Rosen, 285-0473
 Mailing Address: 169 Valley St., San Francisco, CA 94131
 Meetings: Last Thursday of the month (call to confirm), Upper Noe Recreation Center, Day and Sanchez streets, 7:30 p.m.



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First Date

By Janet Thornburg

Continued from the Last Page

going to encounter some. I was prepared for that, but I wasn't ready to be alone in a bedroom with one.

I went into the bathroom and closed the door and checked in the cabinet under the sink. I saw something orange behind a bottle of Lysol and got down on my hands and knees to investigate. It wasn't Clarence, just an old T-shirt stiff with Comet cleanser. Someone tapped on the bathroom door, so I tried to jump up, but my feet somehow slipped out from under me, and on the way down my face hit the cabinet.

For a minute I sat there watching whirling lights. Then I noticed the salty, metallic taste of blood in the back of my throat and felt blood trickling from my nose. From the other side of the bathroom door, Ron asked, "Are you all right in there?"

"Yeah," I told him. I got to my feet and grabbed a handful of Kleenex and held them to my nose. The blood soaked through right away, and I didn't know what else to do except open the door and say, "I've got a damn nosebleed."

"You sure do," he said, and took a dark green washcloth off the edge of the tub and handed it to me. "Why don't you sit down?" he said, nodding toward the toilet. "I'll get Joanne."

I wondered what he thought Joanne could do, but I put down the toilet lid and sat down like he'd told me to. I heard some doors slam and then some pounding, and then Joanne came in with a plastic bag full of crushed ice. "You need to hold this on your nose," she said and handed it to me.

She seemed to know what she was doing, so I said, "Are you a nurse, or just an experienced mom?"

"I'm a doctor," she said. "You look pretty pale. Why don't you lie down?"

She moved a pile of laundry to the dresser, and I took off my shoes and lay down on the bed. The blood tasted nasty in my throat, but it was easier to keep the washcloth and ice bag on my nose while I was lying down, so I stayed there. Joanne sat on the edge of the bed and adjusted the ice. Her hand brushed against my face, and I felt sort of turned on and sort of like I wanted to cry.

Ben came running in with Alexander. "I'm hungry. I'm going to have macaroni and cheese with Alexander. OK?"

"Can he?" Alexander asked. "Daddy's cooking Scooby Doo macaronis."

"No," I told them. "Remember, Ben, your cousins are coming over for dinner tonight." I looked at my watch and saw that it was almost six. Barbara's brother and his family were probably already at our house, and I hadn't let Barbara know what was going on.

"We've got to go," I told Ben. I sat up, but I felt dizzy. Joanne said, "You can't go until the bleeding stops," like I didn't have any say in the matter. Ben saw the blood on my face and started whimpering. Joanne said, "He's just got a nosebleed, Ben. He's going to be all right. Why don't you go have Scooby Doo with Alexander?"

The boys took off, and I didn't fight it, even though I knew Barbara would kill me for letting Ben eat right before dinner. What could I do? I was bleeding like a stuck pig. Clarence was lost. Ben and I were stranded in the house of homosexuals, and that's just how it was.

Once I gave up, it was a big relief to lie back and let Ron feed Ben while Joanne watched over me and Eileen kept searching for Clarence. Maybe I was

lightheaded from blood loss or something. I felt like I was floating.

Then it was like I was floating on my back in a swimming pool. I could smell the chlorine and feel the sun on my face and chest. I sank to the bottom and watched a stream of bubbles rise from my mouth to the bright, glassy surface of the pool. I didn't struggle, just lay there resting against the rough cement on the bottom.

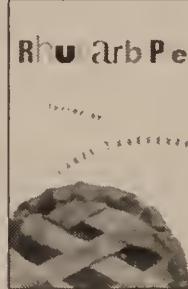
Then there was an explosion of silver above me, and Carol swam down to me with swift strokes. She pulled me up, dragged me out of the pool, and put her warm mouth on mine. Then she blew into my lungs, which made me laugh, but she didn't seem to notice. She blew again and again. I could see she was getting desperate, so I told her I was fine, but she couldn't hear me.

She turned into Joanne. We were the only people at the pool, which seemed odd in the middle of the afternoon. Joanne started crying because I wasn't breathing. "Please," she said. She lay down on top of me, trying to warm me up with her body. I understood then that if I didn't move she'd keep doing these incredible things to bring me back to life. She began to move on top of me, with nothing but our nylon Speedo suits between us.

The real Joanne said, "Mmmmm!"

"What?"

"Paella."



I was still half in the dream world, and the word "paella" sounded like something out of a fairy tale. What was it? Some bizarre kind of food? A scene from one of Ben's videos flashed into my mind. This little boy and his big sister fall through a tree into Fairyland, and one of the good fairies tells them, "You must not eat anything while

you're here. If you do, you can never leave Fairyland." The girl resists the food they offer her, but the little boy forgets and starts eating everything in sight, so he's stuck there.

"Dinner's ready," Ron called from the kitchen, and Joanne got up and left. I could hear chairs scraping and dishes clattering in the dining room. My stomach was growling, but I didn't feel hungry. All I could think about was getting Ben and getting out of there. I checked the washcloth, and it looked like my nose had stopped bleeding, so I got up, ditched the ice bag and washcloth in the sink in the bathroom, and went into the dining room. "Clarence or no Clarence," I said, "we've got to leave now."

"I can't. I'm eating," Ben said and shoveled a spoonful of neon-yellow noodles into his mouth.

It was too late. Ben had eaten in Fairyland. I stood behind his chair, waiting for him to finish and feeling lousy. Of course I knew that video was just a movie, but you know how sometimes made-up stories have a kernel of truth to them? It was my job to protect Ben, and I'd let him down.

"Would you like to try some paella?" Ron asked. "I brought plenty."

"I'd better not," I said. "Barbara's fixing a big meal at home."

"At least sit down with us till Ben's done," Eileen said. "Have a glass of wine."

The wine was good. Ben wanted a second helping of Scooby Doos, and while he ate, Eileen giggled and filled my wine glass again. Her face was flushed, and I wondered how much she'd already had.

Joanne asked me to pass the paella, and when I picked up the platter, the smell of sausage overpowered me.

"Maybe I will try a little," I said.

It turned out to be one of the best things I'd ever eaten. Chicken, shrimp, and sausage, all in one dish, and the sausage wasn't the low-calorie fake stuff that Barbara tries to feed us for breakfast. The meat was embedded in yellow rice that melted in my mouth. I couldn't stop eating. After my third helping, I got Ron's phone number and told him I was going to have Barbara call and get the recipe from him. Of course that made me think of Barbara.

"Wipe that cheese off your chin and let's go, Bud," I said to Ben.

He stuck out his lower lip. "Clarence," he said.

"For Pete's sake, Ben, we turned the house upside down, but nobody could find Clarence," I told him. "You're going to have to sleep with something else tonight."

Ben started shaking his head. Tears ran down his cheeks.

Alexander reached over and patted Ben's shoulder. "You can borrow the Tinker Bell nightgown," he said.

Ben stopped crying and wiped his nose with the back of his hand. Alexander ran downstairs before I could think of a polite way to turn down his offer. A couple of minutes later, he burst back into the dining room, holding something behind his back. "Guess what I found? Clarence! He was under the clown wig in the dress-up box."

The adults were all going "Whoopee!" but Ben just said, "Where's the Tinker Bell dress?" Alexander looked from Joanne to Eileen. "Do I still have to let him borrow it? He's got Clarence back."

"Yes, you do, honey," Joanne said. "You offered it to him. Don't go back on your word."

She went downstairs and got the nightgown. Ben wanted to put it on right away. I said, "How about when we get home?" but he just went ahead and peeled off his clothes. I put the nightgown over his head and fastened the tiny white button at the back of his neck.

Joanne and Alexander walked us to the door.

"What do you say to Alexander?" I asked Ben.

"Can I take the Batman cape too?" he said. Joanne and I laughed, but Alexander didn't.

"Thanks," I told them for Ben.

Outside it had turned cold. As soon as the car warmed up, I turned on the heater and put on a Cat Stevens CD. "Oh very young one, what will you leave us this time?" I sang with Cat as I drove toward home.

"How you doing, buddy?" I asked over my shoulder, but Ben and Clarence had conked out.

At home, my brother-in-law's car was parked in our driveway. I got out of my car and opened the back door. I wondered if I should change Ben's clothes before anyone saw him, but I knew it would wake him up, so I didn't even try. I stood there looking at him in the blue dress, and I remembered a Christmas pageant from when I was a kid. The church was decorated for Christmas with pine boughs, so it smelled like we were in the woods, and the only light was hundreds of candles burning. All the kids who sang were dressed as angels. I had on wings and a silky white gown, and as I sang, I felt the cool air of the sanctuary all over my body, lifting me up with the music. In the glow from the streetlight, Ben looked the way I felt that night—radiant, otherworldly, lighter than air.

I picked him up and held him for a long time before I took him inside.

"First Date" is reprinted with the author's permission from Rhubarb Pie, published September 2005 by Thunderegg Press. Cover to Cover Booksellers on Castro Street will host a reading by Janet Thornburg on Friday, Feb. 24, at 7 p.m.

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IGTA

THE LAST PAGE



lection, "Pink Rods, Red Clouds, and a Rhubarb Pie," was previously published in the cutting-edge fiction magazine *Carve*, and later chosen for inclusion in *Best of Carve, Volume Four* (2003). Other Thornburg stories have graced the pages of literary magazines on both coasts.

Three of the stories in *Rhubarb Pie* center around trains. An ardent traveler, Thornburg admits that she prefers train travel to flying, because "things happen [on trains] that could never take place on planes or in cars. For me, what happens on a journey by train is often more remarkable than what happens at my destination." She points out that the last

story in her book, "Zephyr," in which a very pregnant woman on a train befriends a senior soldier of the Salvation Army, a likeable woman who has successfully campaigned against domestic partner benefits, was based on an actual encounter. "I admired the senior soldier, and I was infuriated by her mission," Thornburg says. "The resulting tension drove me to write a story."

Children also play a large role in her stories. Thornburg and her partner, Michelle Bourgault, have two children, Nick, 10, and Sarah, 8. Several of her stories also explore situations in which gay and straight cultures meet ("First Date," printed below,

is a case in point). Thornburg feels grateful to live in San Francisco, "where gay and straight people have a history of sharing their lives with considerable grace."

Originally from a small town in Colorado, she has lived in Noe Valley for 14 years and says she wouldn't want to live anywhere else. "I love the sunshine, the people, the library, the coffee shops, the twins in strollers..." She thinks living in the neighborhood helps her writing: "It gives me a certain degree of optimism about human possibility, of how it feels to be part of a truly tolerant and diverse community."

In addition to fiction for

the page, Thornburg writes plays, which have been produced in such venues as the Marsh, Venue Nine, and Intersection for the Arts. She's written and performed eight solo shows. Titles of her works include *Antony and Cleopatra Meet Godzilla* and *Dinner Roles*. In 2004, she wrote and performed *Dark Circles*, "an investigation of how old women turn into witches."

Currently, Thornburg is balancing work, motherhood, and coursework for a master of fine arts degree from the Warren Wilson M.F.A. Program for Writers. It's a low-residency program in which students spend two 10-day sessions a year in Swannanoa, N.C., meeting

—Olivia Boler

Noe Street resident Janet Thornburg is a mother, teacher, and playwright. And now, with the fall publication of *Rhubarb Pie*, she is also the author of a book of short stories (Thunderegg Press, \$12.95). The first of the eight stories in the col-

I was dead tired when I got home from work, but Barbara met me at the door and said she needed me to pick Ben up from his play date with Alexander. It was the last thing in the world I felt like doing, but I said all right because I knew if I refused, I'd have to listen to everything she'd done all day and all she still had to do. She gave me a slip of paper with an address. I said, "I thought they lived in Noe Valley," and she said, "No, you're thinking of Alexander B. He lives in Noe Valley, but Alexander P. lives in Bernal Heights."

I drove to Bernal Heights, feeling grouchy about how play dates suck up so much time. Barbara said we've got to do them, though, because if kids don't have play dates, and the other kids start talking about *their* play dates, the ones without play dates feel like rejects.

"Hey," I said to her, "isn't there enough time for that in high school?"

I found the address and parked and went up and rang the bell. I felt stupid standing there and not knowing who was going to answer the door. It was like being on a blind date.

A tall gal in Nike running shorts opened the door and said, "You must be Ben's dad. I'm Joanne." Her hair was short, and her handshake was firm, I mean *firm*. I've noticed that in San Francisco. The women tend to have extremely firm handshakes. I squeezed back hard, to let her know I wasn't intimidated, and we went into the living room, where another woman was sitting on the sofa eating pistachios. This one was all curves and dimples. She didn't stand up, just licked the salt off her fingers and said, "Hi, I'm Eileen. Want some pistachios?"

"No thanks," I said. I was really hungry, but I didn't feel like cracking pistachio shells with my teeth in front of people I didn't know.

"The kids are downstairs," Eileen said. "I'll go get them." She got up, stepped over a puzzle of Noah's ark, and put her bare foot down on something sharp. She yelped and picked up an action figure of Batman and threw it across the room.

It wasn't exactly surprising that she'd stepped on a toy—there wasn't a square foot of carpet that didn't have trains or blocks or stuffed animals or puzzles or kids' clothes on it. Seemed to me like maybe Joanne had been out jogging when she should have been cleaning. Barbara never lets our living room get into that kind of shape. Even when she had to have a C-section with Ben, she was up cleaning the day after she got home from the hospital.

Right after Eileen went downstairs, there were heavy footsteps on the front stairs, and the doorbell rang. "That must be Ron," Joanne said and opened the door.

A muscular guy with an expensive haircut came in carrying a roaster pan with the lid on.

First Date

BY JANET THORNBURG

"This is Ben's dad," Joanne told him.

"Chuck," I said and put out my hand. Ron set the pan down, but before we could shake, Alexander came running in and jumped up into Ron's arms. "Daddy!" he said.

Then my son Ben came around the corner wearing a blue dress-looking thing. I'd be lying if I said it didn't bother me. This had come up before, back in Colorado. He'd had on a pink tutu one afternoon when I went to pick him up at preschool. His teacher told me it was normal, and a couple of times after that I noticed that the class bully—a big bruiser—was wearing the tutu while he terrorized the other kids, so I stopped worrying about Ben wearing it. But now I figured Ben was old enough to know better.

"What do you have on?" I asked him.

"Oh, Alexander's cousin donated that to the costume box," Joanne said.

"I don't want to go home!" Ben said.

"Come on, sport, Mommy's waiting," I told him.

From his father's arms, Alexander said to Ben, "You can't take the Tinker Bell nightgown home."

"I know that," Ben said and stripped it off and threw it on the floor. I was way glad to see that he had on his underwear. Joanne went and got his jeans and T-shirt and shoes and handed them to me, so I started dressing him. It wasn't that easy, but she didn't offer to help, even though he'd taken his clothes off in her house.

Ron took the roasting pan into the kitchen, and I could hear him banging around in there. It was unclear to me who to say thanks to for the play date, so I just tossed it over my shoulder and headed for the door with Ben.

I was reaching for the doorknob when Ben wailed, "I forgot Clarence!" That's the little orange stuffed armadillo that he has to have to go to sleep. We couldn't leave without Clarence—Barbara would send me back in a minute if we went home without him.

"Where'd you leave him, hon?" Joanne asked Ben, but he just gave her that same look he always gives me when I ask him what he did in kindergarten that day, like how would he know what happened millions of years ago?

"We had him downstairs," Alexander said, so all four of the adults followed the kids to the basement. Man, I thought the living room was a mess, but the downstairs made it look good. We all started pawing through piles of Legos and Lincoln Logs and Tinker Toys, but no luck.

After a while it seemed like everybody was losing

interest, so I said, "Sorry to put you through this, but he really can't go to sleep without Clarence."

They nodded, but I could tell they were getting irritated. Ron asked Alexander, "Are you *sure* you left him down here?" Alexander shrugged.

"All right, we'd better be systematic about this," Ron said. "How about two of us continue down here, and two of us take the upstairs?"

I headed upstairs, toward the area of lesser chaos. I hoped Eileen would come upstairs too, but she and Joanne continued to sort through the wreckage below, and Ron followed me up.

"You want something to drink?" he asked me. "I think they have Coke and root beer in the fridge."

"Sure," I said, and we went into the kitchen, opened a couple of root beers, and started our search.

I hadn't drunk root beer since high school, and the taste took me back to hot summer afternoons at the A&W Root Beer stand out on south Townsend. It was right next to the swimming pool, and I spent three months drinking root beer from frosty mugs and trying to get up enough nerve to ask out one of the lifeguards. Her name was Carol. When I finally asked her at the end of August, she said no. Right after that, I got together with Barbara, and that's all she wrote.

Joanne didn't seem like the type to wear perfume, but her bedroom smelled good, and there were a bunch of fancy bottles on the dresser. There were satin sheets on the bed, too. I started thinking maybe she had a side to her that wasn't obvious on first meeting. I was about to look into her drawers to see if she wore sexy underwear, but Ron came in and started looking under the bed.

He dusted off his pants when he stood up.

"Dirty down there," he said.

"Yep," I said.

"I know they're busy with Alexander and all, but they could hire somebody to come in once a week," he said.

"Did you used to live here?" I asked.

"Heavens, no!" he said.

"Well, if you don't mind my asking, how come Alexander calls you Daddy?"

"I am his father, but they're the parents. I live in Pacific Heights. Here." He picked up a picture off the dresser. "Here's Alexander over at our place."

In the picture, Alexander was sitting on the front steps of a Victorian between Ron and another guy who looked a lot like Ron. "That's Dave," Ron said. "He's in L.A. this weekend."

OK. So this was a lesbian-moms, gay-guy-dads situation. Did Barbara know that's what she was sending me into? I'd had some awkward play-date pickups before, but this was off the graph.

Don't get me wrong. I don't have anything against gay people, and I knew when we moved here I was

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